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MAURICE MAETERLINCK

A STUDY

Maurice Maeterlinck

A Study

BY

MONTROSE J. MOSES

163194.
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TO MY WIFE

DOROTHY

"HE WHO SEES WITHOUT LOVING IS ONLY STRAINING
HIS EYES IN THE DARK."

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An old French Scientist once said:

"In research work, you must use the utmost care, or you will find what you are looking for."

FOREWORD

THE value of Maurice Maeterlinck is much more in the fact of his aliveness than in the direct force of his originality. He senses life in every outward detail, and throws away the husk of physical experience as soon as he has translated consciousness into conscience, and matter into spirit. In his observation and in his later expression of opinion, he is the philosopher of change, but even though his position may be transitory, he is in search of the constant factors of life. He looks outward from within, he looks downward from above. He is aloof, despite the fact that he touches humanity at all points.

Such a writer is not only needful in a time like the present, with its materialistic considerations, but he is moulded by the

very conditions which he least resembles. The world has never been without such a thinker; Maurice Maeterlinck is but one of a long line of seers, beginning with Plato and culminating in Emerson. He is as much a part of Emerson as Poe is a part of the romanticism of France, and strange to say, there is not much in the Maeterlinck of the present to stamp him with the Gallic spirit.

His contemplation early led him to brooding, to a haunting sense of fear, of decay, of powerless subservience to destiny. All life was brought by him into bondage for the championship of death; the very external mechanism of his stage, in his "marionette" plays, cast gruesome shadows akin to the morbidness of Poe. Maeterlinck may have created a new shudder from what Richard Hovey calls "the limitation of his emotional range," but the cause for this did not lie deeper than the outward expressions of Nature which he

used with amazing effect to produce a peculiar and distinctive atmosphere.

Maeterlinck is a man of the open; he is healthful and health-giving, and he has never wilfully kept his eye upon the canker-worm. In this respect, he is the opposite of Henrik Ibsen. The latter never changed; he varied now and again; but he rather deepened his conviction than altered it. In every respect is Maeterlinck subject to evolution; he is constantly shifting his base. But he is doing this, not in order to discomfort his readers, but in order to place himself upon a more serene basis in his search after the highest truth. Only in so far as he disturbs himself may he be called a revolutionary, a disillusionizer. His writings are simply expressions of his thinking aloud. There is no design in them, except in so far as they mark the transit of an individual deeply concerned about the hidden forces of existence.

In his youth, Maeterlinck was part of a

literary movement that was effeminate, and he was dedicated to a beauty which kills and to a sense devotion which weakens. The school was decadent, but Maeterlinck escaped its influence—not, however, before he had given expression in its image. After he deserted law definitely for the field of literature, his development may be consistently followed, and to understand Maurice Maeterlinck aright, it is necessary to trace his progression from speculation upon death to glorification of life; from subservience before destiny to the recognition of a will transcending destiny; from a belief in agnosticism to the realization of a justice above the justice of man.

There is a danger in dwelling upon the heights. The realist has this much in his favour; that he breathes the same atmosphere as living men and women; that he knows their happiness and their pain; that he sees them in daily activity and feels them by actual contact. Maeterlinck's ob-

servation is of a different stratum; his men and women are many degrees removed from earth. He hears the roar of cities at the mountain's base, and he cares only for humanity in the spiritual mass. His problem is to raise that mass to the heights from which he looks beyond.

When he first began writing for the theatre, he attempted to apply his philosophical theories to a faint impressionism of life. He learned, when he first began to write poetry, that repetition was effective in creating psychological response, in building up an emotional atmosphere. This repetition entered into the dialogue of his "marionette" dramas to such an extent that Nordau called it Ollendorfian, and people smiled over the dots and dashes of the unexpressed, which deluged his printed page.

It is somewhat difficult at times to determine whether or not Maeterlinck is more interested in the forces of life than

in life itself. His whole conception of *static* drama—almost a contradiction of terms—was based on that quiescence of the visible and on that recognition of the active spirit subservient to destiny, which are least likely to become reconciled to the stage. But though Maeterlinck set himself almost an impossible task, according to the conventions of the theatre, his adherence to the inner life necessitated his use of a stage technique which is his one large and original contribution to the theatre. This is the opposite pole from Ibsen's close treatment of things as they are. It was a trick which Maeterlinck invented in order to create atmosphere—the skilful use of the powers of suggestion which make imminent the unseeable amidst the things we see.

Maeterlinck is now essentially strong, but he is limited by the heights to which he soars; he is circumscribed by the depths from which he becomes conscious of life.

His poetic nature has uppermost control, but this in turn is enriched by a certain interest in the latest manifestations of science. This interest may not be strictly scientific, but it is equally as accurate in its process as Ibsen's rather false treatment of heredity, and is even more effective in its results upon audiences. He is a man of wide interests, so wide that critics have accused him of lacking constancy in point of view, of being only a partial philosopher of a social organism about which he speculates in pseudo-scientific fashion.

In truth, Maeterlinck sentimentalizes the facts of life. He makes use of historical incident, but he loses historical perspective in generalizations. This is the romanticist's method, and though he constantly exhibits evidences of his aliveness, we doubt whether he could ever produce a drama of modern condition and of immediate problematic significance. No man of his serene temperament could hastily

discard the manifestations by which we measure life, but he dwells apart from them as continuously as possible. He brings what he touches to its highest point of cultivation in order that it may manifest a spirit as large as its growth allows. In his garden, among the flowers and bees, he is always fathoming the laws governing perfection; in his theatre, he is always trying how far the unseen may be felt within the form beneath which it masquerades. He is philosopher of the inner life, but his seemingly static, contemplative philosophy is pregnant with disturbing elements which either require a firm faith to withstand or else tend to make faith firm in its individual search for truth.

Where Maeterlinck will tend, it is not my object to show in this book. That he is necessary to the age is unquestioned, and that he has a message and a method is likewise indisputable. Incident in his life is not so important as state of mind. A con-

templative man is active, not in the outward obligations which distract, but in the solitary communings while he is in the open. For the picture we have of Maurice Maeterlinck is not that of a writer buried among books in his library, but of an athlete in a boat, on a bicycle, or in a motor car. Only a few hours are spent at his desk; the bulk of his thinking is done while he is indulging himself in his garden speculations. For though Maeterlinck's interest in Nature may not be literally correct, he extracts that which is necessary for reaching many principles governing human life; flowers hold the key to the secret of passion; bees exhibit the workings of a complete commonwealth. Nothing escapes his observation, and no expression comes from him that does not attempt to make that observation active, that does not seek to apply what he has learned to common experience.

Maeterlinck's essential significance,

therefore, is to be found in his wide application to all modern problems. One moment he is a transcendentalist; another a pragmatist. He compliments the average man by speaking as though their planes of existence were identical. In this respect, he is like Browning who never fully realized that his obscurity—clear in his own mind—was not so clear to others. But I have an idea that Maeterlinck, now at the prime of life, will some day discover laws nearer the cities of men, even as he gradually proved to himself the unfeasibleness of his *static* drama. And as well it may be said that the world in which he finds himself is gradually coming to realize that what Maeterlinck seeks in himself as a human being is not alone peculiar to himself but to all of us. Maeterlinck forces us to think on subjects as old as the ages, and he possesses the art of reviving the ancient arguments by attaching the old philosophy

to new and timely subjects. He is a contemporaneous dreamer.

Constant association with such art, with such supersensitive arrangement of universal forces, may result in profound vision, but it is opened to the charge of narrowness, however pure and elevated it may be. Maeterlinck translates all character into delicate symbols of spiritual principles, and he used to place phantom individuals in an atmosphere heavy with romanticism. Though he seems to have escaped a faint impressionism when he reached "Monna Vanna," he did not desert the past in his choice of subject. He may have now grown slightly self-conscious in his theatre work, for though "Joyzelle" contains much of his former symbolism, and while "The Blue Bird," despite its mystic quality, has all the definiteness of a fairy story, his "Mary Magdalene" fails to combine the best qualities of his own spiritual treatment, or of that dynamic

technique which Madame Maeterlinck is said to have developed in him.

If, as his essays suggest, Maeterlinck is alive to the current of modern progress, why is it he so persistently avoids the *locale* of contemporaneous life? Is his philosophy so filmy, so lacking in substance, that it cannot abide the touch of common incident? It was Mr. Archer, I believe, who persistently quarreled with Maeterlinck for his constant employment of Nature at her most violent, most grotesque moments. But Maeterlinck's philosophy has aided him in escaping all this; in his effort to span the gulf between the known and the unknown, he has found it necessary to be explicit in detail and solid in characteristics. Life does not continually flow behind a veil of dubiousness and blindness.

Despite his sensitiveness to influence, our poet—for he is a poet philosophizing rather than a philosopher poetizing—lends individual charm to everything he

touches. Where he will end does not concern us now; we are interested only in what he is and what he upholds in an age dominantly materialistic. But that he is related to America, that he is necessary to America, is certain. We do not have to know, specifically, much of Ruysbroeck, Novalis, and the mystics who first shaped the mind of Maeterlinck. We claim him by right of Emerson whom he declares to have been his greatest influence. Should he visit this country, his impressions would not be so far removed from his knowledge of life, as to challenge his censure, or as to take him out of his element. For America's love of speed would only increase his zest for the forces governing that speed. The spirit of Wall Street is the spirit of chance, and he has written on that; the spirit of Pittsburgh is analogous to the spirit of the automobile—in fact, of all modern machinery—and he has written on that. He would be as interested in know-

ing where we tend in our progress, as we are in seeing his own development from year to year.

If I have any dominant desire prompting this study of Maeterlinck, it is to uncover the beautiful simplicity of the man, as poet, as thinker, and as a man. Curiously we have none of us heeded Lowell's warning that it is not a mystic's province or privilege to be misty. And so it has almost become a convention to regard Maeterlinck as difficult of understanding, as obtuse in meaning and oblique in expression. For this impression Maeterlinck is himself largely responsible; he upheld a theory with which he is now usually identified, and it is difficult to escape the stigma of a mannerism.

It is a delicate matter to subject a living man to definitive interpretation; it is futile to attempt to place him in perspective, since his position is advancing and shifting. In such a case, it were well to take each

work as a finished product. What does this in itself represent, what does it mean? Advancing another step, we may build up by degrees those characteristics marking the artist, and those attitudes toward the forces of life and toward all live issues defining the thinker. At the end, we may say: in this year of his latest work, Maurice Maeterlinck looks like this, stands for that, and tends toward such and such a goal. After a while a man's literary features become so distinctive that nothing less than a cataclysm would upset the general outlines. Maeterlinck will always be recognized as the same mystic mind; only character changes in the face as it deepens in the heart and soul. I have seen pictures of the author of "Pélléas et Mélisande," wherein the countenance betokened all the melancholy of tragic love; I have seen pictures of the author of "The Double Garden," keen with the robustness of out-of-doors—lover of dogs and master of

fruitful acres. But in all cases, the gazer into hidden depths is uppermost.

In this spirit I approach the subject of Maurice Maeterlinck; I began as an enthusiast, and, while I am still as warm in my admiration, my judgment has sobered; for he challenges dispute even as he invites acceptance. I see him, not as the creator of a new philosophy, but as the recreator of an old one; not as an author with a philosophic manner, but as a philosopher with a charming literary style. His essays are a little more centralized in their underlying thought than Emerson's, and therefore what they gain in singleness of purpose, they lose in ornateness of form; he is not over-rich in efflorescent language. His expression is simple; it is his philosophic fervor which is sweeping. He possesses the power of mounting to great heights from a point of worldly enthusiasm and of rural enjoyment. His sympathies are humble, as when he pleaded a

case for some poor countryman of his, as when his favorite dog, Pélléas, died; his imagination is unique, as when he brought his knowledge to bear upon such a pugilistic member as the fist.

In his subjects, Maeterlinck is an author of surprises; in his treatment, an author of never-tiring sweetness and courtesy. Numberless essays, to say nothing of "The Blue Bird," are indicative of a sense of humor; considerations of "Lear," "Macbeth," and "Solness," translations of the mystics, and familiarity with scientific authorities measure his extraneous tastes. Every piece of his work shows him subject to change—and as a man in transition I choose to consider him. I have evidence for every step in this growth—illustrations of his shifting conception of the symbol, of his impressionistic sketches in poetry, called "Serres Chaudes," many of which were embryonic notes for future dramas of a "marionette" character.

Like Ibsen, Maeterlinck is dependent upon translation for the average reader. In prose, Alfred Sutro has proven more satisfactory than Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, though the latter seems now to be the English exponent of Maeterlinck, as Archer has been of Ibsen. The feeling work accomplished by the late Richard Hovey, when he translated the early dramas, makes the reader deplore the unfeeling rendition of "The Blue Bird" and the awkward phrasing of "Mary Magdalene." Not a strictly popular, but an authoritative edition of Maeterlinck, sufficiently marked by the style of the original to be popular, should be forthcoming from his American publishers.

I say this since in English we are not always given what goes by the same title in French. A notable instance of this variation is seen in the 1904 *Société du Mercure de France* edition of "Le Tresor des Humbles," compared with the 1908 English

translation. The latter omits altogether three essays most important in the evolution of Maeterlinck, namely, "Ruysbroeck L'Admirable," "Emerson," and "Novalis." The one tenable excuse for this may be that these are introductions to Maeterlinck's own renderings of his masters from the German and from the Flemish. In the case of Emerson, he prefaced a translation by J. Will. The English reader will find therefore that there is much of Maeterlinck that may be known only in the French; various attempts have been made to catch the peculiar melody of his poems; while his "Macbeth" and adaptation of John Ford's drama are illustrative of his ability as faithful translator himself.

Maurice Maeterlinck lends himself readily to varied editorial treatment; this is a palliative to those who wish philosophy in a nut shell, who are addicted to the buying of an author's golden nuggets, or

his apposite thoughts. Let a man be known as profound, and he is best understood, or rather more willingly understood, in amended form. Of these books, fortunately, there are only a few.

There is a sufficiently large body of literature upon Maeterlinck to have kept an assistant at work for many weeks in the Bibliothéque Nationale. But I do not care to burden this book with too much precise research, first because our American libraries are not over-zealous in keeping pace with such current literature; second because much of the material is repetitious, and third because the outlook upon the subject is usually ephemeral and hysterical. The German commentaries are chiefly concerned with the philosophical aspects of Maeterlinck's work; the French critics, while interpretative, are also personal, as far as a life of Maeterlinck can be personal. Two of the most suggestive surveys have been Ad. van Bever's review in

"Les Célébrités d'Aujourd'hui," and Georges Leneveu's consideration in his "Ibsen et Maeterlinck." In English, the student has little to consult. Except Gérard Harry's biography, which is peculiarly colorless, and which is after all a French view, the American reader has nothing but short essays or magazine articles to rely on.

For this reason, I trust that a connected study will not be unwelcomed. I have included a bibliography as a working basis for the student, should he care to carry the subject further.

M. J. M.

New York, August, 1911.

CHAPTER I

MAETERLINCK, THE MAN

"The frankest and most loyal man has the right to conceal from others the greatest part of what he feels."—Maeterlinck.

A SILENT man is difficult to know; first, because events are not significant in his life, and second, because one feels a reticence in piercing the veil behind which he seems to dwell. Maeterlinck's personality should be painted in delicate colours, with a certain impressionistic touch that dwells lightly upon form, and leaves the canvas pregnant with atmosphere. If he has had storm and stress, struggle has only served to make him calm and strong; if he has passed through exacting experience, it has all been transmuted into a quiet wisdom that places him among the seers. The portrait is such as one must love—modest

and unassuming, boyish and sad with all the dream quality of youth.

The face has a commanding sweetness. Maurice Maeterlinck is in no way ascetic; he is thoroughly human and healthful, his life being a kind of paradox. For he lives in the open, in order that he may live within himself; he is a man in contact with earth, in order that he may the better dwell among the stars. As an offset to every mystical quality in his nature, one is able to mention some tangible activity that keeps him alive to the sense of growing things. There is no dead weight to Maeterlinck's learning; there is no preceptorial attitude to his style. He is a man of the world who has climbed to a height.

But a silent and an apparently quiet man does not necessarily betoken one whose spirit is persistently at rest. Maeterlinck is not one to obtain his knowledge of life from books, even though he is deeply read; he is not one to be firmly held by a theory

when a principle is at stake; he is not one to misuse the facts of life, the manifestations of Nature, in order that he may the easier reach those forces which constitute life itself. Maeterlinck is thoroughly honest with himself, and, through his writings, with those who read him. His development is evidence of his plasticity of mind; he adapts his mediævalism to the conditions of modern times; he attaches these conditions to a world-formula that transcends particular belief or special political and social faith. He is a seeker after truth, and facts are the mileposts in the long way that he has elected to tread alone.

It might well be questioned whether Maeterlinck did entirely elect his course in life; not that I would claim destiny to have a hand in painting the portrait, inasmuch as Maeterlinck's path has changed direction several times through the sheer force of his will to believe differently. But the march of events does leave impress

upon character, and the early career of Maeterlinck is as significant as the early career of Ibsen. As far as nationality is concerned, however, the two men were very different; for though Maeterlinck grew up amidst Flemish tradition, and though he allied himself with a young school of poets who brought revolution into Belgian literature, he soon outgrew his Flemish and even his Gallic traits. Whereas Ibsen, a voluntary exile from home for several decades, was never so completely Norwegian as he was while living in Germany. These two challenge comparison, as much for their unlikeness as for their similarity. The citizens of Skien were not cordial to young Ibsen as he walked the streets, mentally lampooning the smug families of the town. Gand far from welcomed the imaginative melancholy of her poets, among whom Maeterlinck counted himself. In neither

case was the atmosphere such as to draw the best from a man.*

Yet events have shown that the constitutional difference between Ibsen and Maeterlinck at the beginning lay in the fact that whereas the moroseness of the former was a very part of him, the morbidity of the latter was only a passing phase of art and the man finding themselves. The two, in their intellectual and spiritual approach toward life, are totally dissimilar, though fighting for the same broad truth. Ibsen was a social philosopher working for that freedom of the individual which can afford to go into voluntary bondage; Maeterlinck is a mystic who sees through life along the current in which life is flowing. The one is a realist, seeking to clear society of its ills, which man himself has caused through his narrow, dogmatical estimate of human nature; the other is an idealist who sees in man only active princi-

*See Leneveu, "Ibsen et Maeterlinck."

ples at work—a work hindered by man's own doubts and distractions. Ibsen is much more dynamic than Maeterlinck; he is much more expert in the use of the symbol in connection with psychology. But where the Belgian serves as a more positive force is in the direct appeal he makes to the individual, rather than in an indirect one through the medium of a social problem.

Both literary forces have been necessary in these times, the one making nations question political and social institutions, the other putting a soul into democracy during a period when we were apt to forget that even materialism has a soul, that even machinery has a spirit. So that I regard Maeterlinck as I would a man on the flagpole of one of our tallest buildings —nearer the stars than the city, yet within sound of both. And though reticent and shy, his philosophy has placed him in conspicuous position, and the city has been forced to look up and marvel. In life, this

is quite as necessary as pinning one's faith to fact. Ibsen reached that point when he realized that the muckrake was not as healthy as the plow. The quality of "uplift" in Maeterlinck is a reinforcement of the transcendentalism of Emerson.

The factors which have placed Maurice Maeterlinck among the foremost figures of the present are easily discernible in every aspect of his life; he has kept his mind open and he has kept his heart fresh, and Nature has done about as much to develop him as mental training. Ibsen was also a man of the open, well on into life, planning summer walks over hill and dale and mountain, but his intellect was never free from brooding over the miseries of human beings. Maeterlinck, with a flower in his hand, was ever among divine laws —laws as common, if not as conscious, to the ordinary garden bloom as to man. I feel assured that this out-of-doors attitude which Maeterlinck assumes, even in his

solitude, is what has helped to develop his robustness. He is not effeminate, he is not conciliatory, he does not hedge. He experiments, he watches, he waits. Then he proclaims. That is his method as an essayist.

Therefore, the portrait of Maurice Maeterlinck must have a background of flowers, with an horizon suggesting infinity —not a hazy skyline, but one sharp and clear, with faint suggestions of a modern city. It is the quiet, the spacious silence, the shadowy woods, the flowers amidst cloisters, that reconcile the figure of Maeterlinck in my mind to St. Wandrille; not the fact that it was once the home of the Benedictine Order. And there is something uniquely in accord with his buoyancy to note an unauthentic report that, down one of the long halls of this mediæval pile, the stolid figure of Maurice Maeterlinck may sometimes be seen swinging along on roller skates. This is symbol to me of how

far ecclesiasticism has touched the man; he realizes its presence, but he does not droop amidst it.

Maurice Maeterlinck (Polydore-Marie-Bernard) was born at Gand on August 29, 1862, member of a Flemish family well-known in the district of Renaix during the fourteenth century. For one ancestor, a bailiff of distinction, through his generosity in measuring out grain during a famine, won the family name which the poet now bears, Maeten in Flemish meaning measure or spoon. His recent biographer, M. Harry, writes:*

"The most part of the Belgian littérateurs deem him very unlike themselves, who by tradition and choice hold aloof from the domain of speculation and abstract thought which is his, and are preeminently painters of material and plas-

*Harry considers the Parisian pronunciation of the name—Meterlingue—incorrect, and gives the proper way as Mätterli-nk, the final letters pronounced separately.

tic life, lineal descendants of Rubens, Teniers, Baron Leys. . . . Yet for all this, Maeterlinck has kept, in character no less than in physique, the impress of his Flemish stock, and this great-great-grandson of Van Artevelde, once firmly convinced of the justice of his case, has brought to the defence of his rights the inflexible perseverance, the 'gentle obstinacy,' which characterizes all the more cultivated Flemings, and degenerates into brutality and violence in those of the inferior classes."

His early childhood was passed in Oostacker, near a canal which connects Ghent with a small town, Terneuzen, in Dutch Flanders, and here it would seem, under the tutelage of his Roman Catholic parents, amidst shrubs and flowers, in a house set well back from the road, the boy first began to cultivate his fondness for solitude. That he was a dreamy lad his neighbors can testify, for there is a traditional be-

lief that Monsieur Maurice—a name given him by all, from the veriest peasant to the village curate—possessed the gift of second sight.

We have a glimpse of the place in the opening directions for "Home": "An old garden, planted with willows. At the back, a house in which three windows on the ground floor are lighted." But this impression is faint in comparison with the actual colour of the country around Oostacker, sweet and pleasant, and to Maeterlinck, rivalling Zealand, "the concave mirror of Holland." He has written thus, in charming fashion, of a land "that gladly spreads out before us as so many pretty, thoughtful toys, her illuminated gables and wagons and towers; her cupboards and clocks, that gleam at the end of the passage; her little trees, marshalled in line along quays and canal-banks, waiting, one might almost think, for some quiet beneficent ceremony; her boats and her barges, her flow-

er-like doors and windows, immaculate dams, and elaborate, many-coloured drawbridges; and her little varnished houses, bright as new pottery."*

Such an atmosphere was healthy, even if later it was to prove dispiriting to the art fervor which seized Maeterlinck, and if it did nothing more for the boy than instil a love for Nature within him, his debt to Oostacker is great. Here it was that wild flowers and garden plants became a passion with him; here it was that he began to know the old man, so lovingly described in "The Life of the Bee,"† who awakened in him that close observation which marks his social study of the hive; here it was also that he began to show a certain literary taste, and to make friends of lasting character, even though he was to depart from them in his practise of a common love for poetry.

*See "The Life of the Bee," paragraph 4.

†See "On the Threshold of the Hive," paragraph 4.

The Jesuit College of Sainte-Barbe was at Gand, and so was a university for the study of law. To both of these institutions Maeterlinck was soon prepared to go. There is no record of his having excelled in any of his studies, though he was versed in Latin and Greek, and a Jesuit influence is not conducive to a broad interest in science. Maeterlinck's future passion was never to be of a systematic order; rather was his reading to be much more in accord with his momentary interest. He saw far beyond the authorities he consulted, and his thoroughness only enabled him the better to illumine exact knowledge and to raise scientific speculation to the plane of human application.

His education at Sainte-Barbe brought him into intimate relationship with Charles Van Lerberghe and Grégoire Le Roy, who were to exert that same hold over him that Due and Schulerud had on Ibsen. When the three were not forced to attend strictly

to the routine of the college, they were together, reading the poets and confiding their literary aspirations to one another. In fact it was at this time that Van Lerberghe, who may be considered the godfather to "Serres Chaudes," first expounded his poetic theories. He writes:

"Maeterlinck and I formed the habit, in college, of addressing our literary efforts to each other. They were subjected on either side, to criticisms both lengthy and severe; and to this I attribute the fact that neither of us dreamed of sending them to the reviews. Maeterlinck sent me verses, especially sonnets, in the manner of Heredia, but Flemish in colour; short stories similar to those of De Maupassant, a comedy full of humour and ironical observation, and other ventures. It is worth noting, however, that he never attempted a tragedy, never an epic poem, never anything florid and declamatory, and never anything languorously sentimental. Nei-

ther the rhetorical nor the elegiac had any hold on him."*

I shall have more to say of Van Lerberghe later, in relation to Maeterlinck's poetry, for in his own personality, in his ascetic inclination, in his determined formalism, he was at first much more in accord with the Jesuit atmosphere than his associate. Van Lerberghe's precision of style did not aggravate the Fathers as did Maeterlinck's avowed romantic tendencies. This incipient literary academy at Sainte-Barbe encouraged in the general reader's mind a conviction that Van Lerberghe and Maeterlinck were imitators, the one of the other, but on examination such was not the case. Two impressionistic minds subject to the same literary influences—the school of Rossetti and Burne-Jones—are bound to exhibit the same Pre-Raphaelite tendencies.†

*See Van Bever.

†*La Jeune Belgique*, circa 1886-87, contains a short article by Georges Rodenbach on these college days.

These days, therefore, are more closely identified with the art inclinations and development of Maeterlinck, than with the scientific and philosophical tastes which later coloured his entire literary outlook. We know, however, that in glancing back he always refers to the Jesuit Fathers as exercising narrow tyranny over him; pleasant though his associates were, he would not again voluntarily subject himself to seven years intellectual limitation such as began around 1878, when he entered the college.

In 1885, he began the study of law, his family being intent on his following that profession; as yet he had not sufficiently determined his inclination to take any other stand than acquiescence, so that soon he was a member of the bar in his native town, his greatest asset being a clear and practical common sense; his worst drawback being a weak voice. He was not a

pleader, though at times he appeared in the courts at Ghent as advocate for some peasant; and no doubt even now he might be persuaded to protect a needy case, were there no one else ready to render the service.*

Thus, Maeterlinck passed through two events in his life with spirit free and searching. He had seen a large proportion of his associates at Sainte-Barbe prepare for the priesthood; he had pleased the desires of his father. The time was now come to please himself. Paris was beckoning to him, and his youth had to answer the call; in fact, his great love of seclusion came after he had tasted of the noise and tension of the Latin Quarter.

Therefore, in 1886, accompanied by

*He was convinced that "to study law, it is necessary to walk among ruins, in a graveyard which shall also be a species of dockyard. I do not feel myself a ship. Life and thought have for me other meaning." See interview with M. Joseph Galtier: "Les Éducateurs de ma Pensée," in *Les Annales,* No. 1445, p. 232.

Grégoire Le Roy, he occupied rooms at 22 Rue de Seine, and gave himself over to the Symbolists whose official organ was "La Pléiade." A feverish thrill took hold of him, and as a reaction against Jesuit training, as a reward for months of legal study, he saturated himself in the artistic atmosphere.

"I saw Villiers de l'Isle-Adam very often," he says, "at the Brasserie Posset, in the Faubourg Montmartre. Saint-Pol-Roux, Mikhaël, Quillard, and others came there regularly. Mendès passed there occasionally."*

There was much inspiration to be gained in these surroundings, but he had to break himself of that emotional indefiniteness, even as later he had to check his continuous habit of smoking, gained no doubt during those long hours of conversation with Edmond Picard,—dreams through

*See Jules Hûret: "Enquête sur l'evolution littéraire."

blue veils of tobacco smoke. Among such a coterie, Villiers* aired his stories, exercising marked influence upon Maeterlinck. Mallarmé's poems were quoted, and no doubt these men, many of them struggling against fortune only to meet defeat, inspired Maeterlinck to publish some of the verses he had written. This atmosphere both encouraged him and gave him a revulsion of feeling. It started him upon a career which the practical bourgeoisie of Ghent, like the Grimstad folk in Ibsen's case, considered wasteful and ineffective; it likewise made him more willing to return to the quiet of Gand in winter, and to the embowered home at Oostacker in summer, where he now became concerned in the care of bees.

Around this time, Maeterlinck was serving in the Civic Guard of Ghent, fulfilling the regulations of the law in seemingly irk-

*For Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, see Huneker's "Iconoclasts." Verlaine humorously called this group "Cymbalists."

some manner, since he so often found his musket rusty when it came to inspection day. He cannot be said to have been actively engaged in literary labour during this period, for he was not a rapid producer, and allowed only a few poems to slip into print. Already the spell of solitude was upon him, and in his work, whether in or out of doors, he lived up to his abhorrence of "routine as nature abhors a vacuum."

On March 1, 1886, there had been founded "La Pléiade," to which Maeterlinck contributed a prose piece, "Le Massacre des Innocents";* he had likewise been included in a collection of verse representative of eighteen Belgian poets, "Le Parnasse de la Jeune Belgique" (1887), Georges Rodenbach being instrumental in

*Contained as a supplement to Harry's "Life"; also included in "The Massacre of the Innocents and Other Tales by Belgian Writers." Tr. by Edith Wingate Rinder; Stone and Kimball (Duffield), 1894. "Le Parnasse de la Jeune Belgique" was issued by Lacomblez.

making him known to the publisher. "Serres Chaudes," hothouse blooms scarcely tangible, yet exuding a perfume of rare penetration, was being slowly evolved all this while, but though in these half-formed poems one is able to detect something of the calibre of mind yet to come, it was not until "La Princesse Maleine" was issued—the year 1889 bringing to light both the verses and the play—that Maeterlinck, through the ill-advised praise of Octave Mirbeau, found himself famous. It may have encouraged him; it certainly gave him satisfaction to realize that he had been received by others, where his own country had regarded him askance. But this did not disturb Maeterlinck; he pursued the natural bent of his mind, formulating his own theories, illustrating his own technique, reading according to his own tastes, and modifying his view as his philosophy brought clearer to his understanding the close relation in art be-

tween the unseen and its outward manifestations.

What the over-enthusiasm of Mirbeau did serve to do was to make Maeterlinck careful in his social engagements. He refused to be fêted or idolized, even though everywhere he went, outside the privacy of his home, he was besieged by the curious. This Belgian Shakespeare had just cause to despise the Bard of Avon. Under date of October 4, 1890, he wrote to a friend:*

"I beseech you *in all sincerity*—I repeat, *in all sincerity*—if you can stop the interviews you speak of, stop them. I am getting horribly tired of all this. Yesterday, as I was at dinner, two reporters of the ——— plopped into my soup. I am off to London; for I am sick and ill of these new experiences. So, if you cannot prevent the interviews, the fellows will have to interview my servant-maid."

He was absolutely sincere in this desire

*Quoted in Harry.

for quiet and simplicity. When asked to dine, it was his custom to accept only on the promise that he should not be subject to ceremony. "I am a peasant," he would declare. But this was not the real reason; his face, his bearing, were indicative of the true cause. Already the outlines of Maurice Maeterlinck had assumed definite proportions; he was a big boy with broad shoulders and with a face showing all the calm and sweetness of the dreamer, whose eyes, blue to the depths, measured the mystery and tragedy of a soul beneath. Already Maeterlinck's head was turned toward the far horizon of life; already he was measuring infinity in finite terms. There was nothing flaccid in such a countenance; it was full of the colour of Flanders. Van Bever met him in 1893, and even then he gave one the impression of being the only writer who, in the midst of class wrangling and scientific question-

ing, had been able to retain his high passion and his big ideas.

About this time, so Maeterlinck confessed to M. Joseph Galtier, he became enamoured of Elizabethan dramatic poetry, other than that of Shakespeare.* He had mastered English sufficiently to read Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, and Heywood in the original, and there was something about the efflorescence of their style which appealed strongly to his romantic tastes—a romanticism far different from that of Byron. "Since then," he writes, "I have assiduously familiarized myself with the English poets, notably Shelley and Robert Browning. I owe much, also, to Germany; for I have studied all the German classics, and I have read the whole of Schopenhauer, preferring in especial his 'Les Parerga.' "

Even in solitude, nevertheless, a man must feel himself in the midst of stimula-

*See *Les Annals,* No. 1445, p. 233.

tion. Belgium seemed unable to furnish the necessary impetus. Maeterlinck left his native land just at the crucial period of his life, and 1896 is a significant turning point in his development. By that time, he had very thoroughly formulated his theory of the *static* drama, and had illustrated the same by a series of marionette plays whose one distinctive quality was their suggestive psychology of unseen emotion. By that time also he had become so thoroughly a disciple of Emerson, Ruysbroeck, and Novalis that he was ripe to put into prose what could not be contained in the fragile shape of his theatre.

So, during 1896, he definitely deserted Flanders for Paris, where, ten years before, he had been weaned from the law. At the play one evening, he was introduced to a lady, Norman by birth, who was cordial in her admiration for his work. People who knew Maeterlinck at that time say that he was awkward as well

as timid, and only with difficulty was he able to answer the effusiveness of the well-known actress who stood before him. This was the meeting between Georgette Leblanc and her future husband.

He now came under her spell completely as far as his dramatic theory was concerned; his attitude changed gradually, beginning with "Aglavaine et Sélysette" and terminating in the full-blooded figure of "Monna Vanna." The understanding between these two must have been as rapid as it was complete, for when "The Treasure of the Humble" appeared during this year, 1896, it bore an indication of intellectual and spiritual accord, in the dedication, which ran thus:

"I dedicate to you this book which is, in effect, your work. There is a collaboration more lofty and more real than that of the pen; it is that of thought and example. I have not been obliged to imagine laboriously the resolutions and

the actions of a wise ideal, or to extract from my heart the moral of a beautiful reverie necessarily a trifle vague. It has sufficed to listen to your words. It has sufficed that my eyes have followed you attentively in life; they followed thus the movements, the gestures, the habits of Wisdom herself."

When one has read thus far in the life of Maurice Maeterlinck, he has reached the height of his eventful life. He is a man of warmth, and when he refused to come to New York during the winter of 1910, it was quite as much to avoid the snow, as to escape the wear and tear of public adulation. For he has two homes, and his flight to either is like the migration of birds seeking the warm winds and the flowers. His homes have been many since leaving Oostacker: the Rue Raynouard, the Rue Pergolèse, in a house at Passy which was once occupied, according to

Harry, by Balzac. Once also he resided in a quaint country house in the hamlet of Grûchet-St.-Simon, near Dieppe—a Normandy situation of some beauty. He is like the bee, flitting here and there, darting to England, travelling through Holland, speeding through France in his car.

But now, with some regularity he may be counted upon to pass his winters in the South of France at Les Quatres Chemins, near Grasse, amidst the luxuriance of olive trees and grape-vines and roses, beneath pergolas à l'Italienne, and his summers at l'Abbaye St. Wandrille, amidst thirty-five acres of dense woods. If he has to run to Paris, he hides himself in the suburbs, at Neuilly, from whence he sallies forth to arrange with his publishers or his managers.

This is the outward life of Maurice Maeterlinck; what the inward development is had best be traced in his works. What we know of his outward bearing

carries warmth and appeal to us. He is a man who talks without haste, who writes when he wills and what he wants. Within past years, he has shaved his mustache and his hair has become sprinkled with gray; this gives him the appearance of an overgrown boy, fond of reflection, yet whose blood is healthy with the regular hours of sleeping and rising, and with the exercise of out-of-doors.

He contemplates in action, so to speak, speeding along the lower Seine in his automobile, with observation keyed. Sometimes he has been known to skate as far as Bruges; at other times he has been found canoeing; still again on a bicycle, threading the highways and byways of the countryside. In such pleasant guise, he passes the days that increase into years.

"When I have told you," Georgette Leblanc writes, "that he spends the summer in Normandy and the winter in the South; that he rises early, visits his flowers and

fruits, his bees, his river, his big trees; sets to work, then returns to his garden; that after his meals he goes in for the sports he is fond of—the canoe, the automobile, cycling or walking; that every evening the light of the lamp illumines his reading, and that he goes to bed in good time, you will not know much, for these little customs are but the vessels, larger or smaller, which hold the substance of life."

He is a man of simple habits, and St. Wandrille, huge in its mediæval proportions, is not crowded with servants and attendants. He never departs from his quiet communion with thought, and while fishing for trout in the stream flowing near his house, he finds adequate leisure for the speculation he most desires. In fact, his tastes surprise those expecting to find him wholly profound; when one may imagine him reading a book on philosophy, he is most likely to be deep in the latest treatise on bait. In his study, he writes his manu-

scripts in clear, decided hand, passing them over to his secretary for typewriting. He is unaffected, with no marks of greatness about his person, save the fire that shines in his eyes. Indeed, M. Harry declares that he may be easily taken for a chauffeur in his short jacket and cap, or for a gardener, clad in an old apron and a dilapidated felt hat on his head, working among the plants.

One has only to read his essay on the dog to note the gentleness characterizing his attitude toward all life below the relative scale of man's measure; one has only to glance through his translations of Ruysbroeck and to note his reading of Plotinus and other philosophers, to comprehend his patience as a student. In Maeterlinck, we find the same surprising lack of a music love and understanding that characterized Tennyson, the most lyrical of English poets. When "Pélléas et Melisande," "Ardiane et Barbe-Bleue," and "Monna

Vanna" were scored for the opera, it was Madame Maeterlinck who passed judgment, and upon whom all the technical details fell.

Undoubtedly, in the presence of Maurice Maeterlinck, there is a feeling of special dedication, which Wordsworth's line—"His soul was like a star and dwelt apart"—very fitly describes. But he is most active when most quiet. Believing as he does in the soul's life, he gives that life ample opportunity to unfold in silence. And once more we accord with Wordsworth in the belief that there are thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears.

Whatever Maeterlinck does, contains the impress of the student; amidst pictures and books, seated at a table near the window which brings to him the sound of Nature outside, this healthy mystic writes his essays which first are destined to appear in magazines. Even now he is busy with a new play to follow his

"Mary Magdalene." His catholicity of taste is very evident in his library. Someone has written:

"Maeterlinck reflects in his works the international character of his country. . . He has all the glow and fervor of the Roman; the keen human insight of the Anglo-Saxon; and that peculiar religious mysticism which is a Germanic quality exemplified by Swedenborg, Lavater, Jacob Boehme, and by his own noble countryman, Johann Ruysbroeck."

But among all of Maeterlinck's books, there is one of especial significance to us—in fine print and on bad paper—a book scored and underscored with pencil lines. It is a dilapidated volume of Emerson's "Essays." And when asked pointedly about influences, the author of "Wisdom and Destiny" does not hesitate to pay tribute to the Sage of Concord.

CHAPTER II

MAETERLINCK, THE POET

"Many thoughts are too delicate to be thought, many more to be spoken."—Novalis.

FOR the proper study of Maeterlinck, the poet, it is necessary to have in mind four things: the morbid atmosphere of Poe, nowhere better realized than in "The Fall of the House of Usher"; the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, author of "Les Illuminations"; the artistic development of Charles Van Lerberghe, who personally had more influence on Maeterlinck than ever his "Les Flaireurs"; and finally, Maeterlinck's own conception of the province of the poet,—his theory and his attitude.* In addition, it is necessary to con-

*Tr. by Aline Gorren. George Leneveu, in "Ibsen et Maeterlinck," refers also to the poetry of Georges Rodenbach.

sider those early influences on an impressionistic young man who, having escaped the exacting conditions of a Jesuit college, and having an early taste for Burne-Jones, Odilon Redon, and Georges Minne, suddenly found himself listening to Stéphane Mallarmé and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam.*

The school of "Cymbalists" consisted of Maeterlinck's early associates. Grégoire LeRoy, author of "Mon Cœur Pleure d'Autrefois," found himself forced to turn electrical engineer; and later, in his desire to be made librarian of the Collège Saint-Michel, he was chagrined to realize that the fact of his being a poet stood in his way. Mikhaël, Jean Ajalbert, Pierre Quillard, and Edmond Picard were followers of this impressionism, which depended largely upon the choice of a wide disparity of detail for psychological effect. In scientific terms this would mean dissociation of ideas. These were the men who

*See Appendix B.

had so much to do with the whilom fate of Max Waller's *Jeune Belgique,* for which Maeterlinck wrote a small poem, signed "Mater." Before this, in 1886, as we have noted, he published in LeRoy's "Pléiade" "The Massacre of the Innocents," under the Flemish spelling of his Christian name, "Mooris." This magazine survived only six numbers,* and boasted of only eighteen subscribers; hence Maeterlinck's reputation was not far-heralded.

But the story itself is a sheer bit of realism, saturated with romantic morbidness—a story full of Flemish colour, resembling a canvas splotched with yellow, blue, and red. The Biblical scene comes to life again in a village reminiscent with touches of Oostacker, and heightened by a Spanish

*Maeterlinck's piece appeared in the third number; May, 1886. It is found in the English edition of Harry's "Maeterlinck," and also in Edith Wingate Rinder's "Tales by Belgian Writers" [Stone and Kimball, 1894].

flavour of cruelty. It is pointless, but minute, especially minute, like Meissonier or Detaille in the variety of its object painting. What the sketch typifies is a certain rapid observation which nervously creates, with the slightest effort and in the fewest words, a vivid impression. Amidst faint hints of historical faithfulness, there is an abstractness about the scene, and despite the ruthless carnage there is a delicacy of treatment that foreshadows the incongruous pictures of "Serres Chaudes." In "The Massacre of the Innocents," Maeterlinck remembered scenes from his own surroundings, and as a literal "lay-out," heightened by a natural inclination to sentimentalize, this small story is distinctive.

There is a mill in the light of flames started by marauding Spaniards; there is a sweep of snow with the starlit blue overhead, and here and there flocks of beasts, with a huddled group of wild folk in blue breeches and red cloaks. In the midst of

merry-making, there are thrust the swinging bodies of the dead, and near ruins with such picturesque names as "Blue Lion" and "Golden Sun," happen gruesome events. Maeterlinck sets forth his scene in simple manner, as though the details were on solid planes ready to be moved, a narrative Noah's ark landscape. The quality of horror is uppermost, and the most vivid figures are those of the hunchback and the idiot.

In fact, the distinguishing note in this sketch is not of warmth or of humanity, but of surface decoration. The movement is rather one of gaily decked puppets than of characters in the flesh and blood—disagreeable bits of color splashed on china. There is a dash of *kermesse* joy with a wail of death; there are little boys and girls decked in red and pink and white, fleeing before drawn swords. The sky line is far away, and the wonder is that so sharply, so quickly, Maeterlinck can sug-

gest the extent of the onslaught, and the cold, determined progress of the massacre. Already we find Maeterlinck's love of the mystic seven, of the white beard, of the tower significantly looming above the carnage, all entering his decorative conceptions. The accessories of this story are what would be necessary to foster such nuances as permeate "Serres Chaudes." In fact, the descriptions are more like exercises in fitting detail effectively, in order to create feeling. In a way, I like to regard "The Massacre of the Innocents" as I regarded Ibsen's little story, "The Wedding." It illustrates the influence of surroundings upon imagination; it determines the bent of the artist's mind without measuring the calibre of his thought.*

There was another "Pléiade" published

*Verhaeren, Émile: *La Plume,* 1901, 404; 1904, 33, 99. Ajalbert, J.: *La Plume,* 1901, 356. De l'Isle-Adam: Symons: "Symbolist Movement." Kraemer, Alexis von: Thesis Study; 1900. Mallarmé, S.: Symons: "Symbolist Movement."

in Brussels, for which, on February 20, 1890, Maeterlinck wrote a critique on Iwan Gilkin's* "Damnation de l'Artiste" —a book from which he gleaned "fair white at the gates of hell," and in which he was carried to the "depths of a consciousness abnormally darkened." These poets seemed to harrow themselves unnecessarily, and for the sake of seeing whether they might again reach light through blackness. They were fond of speaking of a flower as wilfully blue; of giving the quality of maliciousness to the elements of the air; of attributing to words the richness of almost unutterable thought. Maeterlinck was responsive to first impressions; he believed that the eye should accustom itself to the "nocturnal aspects of words"; he echoed Hello,† who averred that "where

*Gilkin's poem was reprinted, 1897, by Fischbacher, Paris. In its original issue, it contained a frontispiece by Odilon Redon.

†For a short account of Hello, see Huneker's "Egoists." A life was written by Lasserre. Hello wrote many short stories, and translated Ruysbroeck.

no spice of horror is, there neither love nor light is to be found."

And thus early he recognized the mystery surrounding a poet's meaning. What the artist has not consciously intended is the real true essence of his work. In this frame of mind, Maeterlinck has written: "The poet premeditates this, premeditates that, but woe to him if he does not attain something else besides! He enters with his lamp the treasure-house of darkness and the ineffable, but woe to him, if he knows to a jot and tittle with what booty he returns, and if the best part of his glory is not the jewel he has won by mistake." It is what we come upon unawares that is most likely to contain the secret.

Maeterlinck's tendency, therefore, is to seek for the unseen, to fathom the true essence of the symbol; so to make use of the occult force within things as to bring others to realize the presence of this inner quality. It is interesting to note how nat-

urally his theory of *static* drama followed from his attitude toward the symbol, for if that which is truest and purest appears outside of his control, and independent of his knowledge or of his design, then, in using a symbol, the poet must be passive in it. The symbol is the vital core of the poem, and without it no work of art may exist.

It is well, at the outset, to determine something of Maeterlinck's concept of the symbol. He recognized one of deliberate purpose—an allegorical form, whereby abstractions are made human. Many of his marionette dramas are of such a species. But there is a more potent symbol in the unconscious force which acts in spite of will, in spite of thought. In the first, we see that a form of art—the allegory—is born; in the latter, the work of art has to be, before the symbol is abstracted. Hence Maeterlinck's assertion that no work of art could be born alive from the

symbol, "but the symbol is always born of the work—if it be alive."

Therefore, the symbol has an independent creative power apart from the imaginative power of the poet. In outward construction for the stage, Francisque Sarcey claimed that, should the dramatist be faithful to the impetus of his first conception, there are certain necessary scenes —what he called *scènes à faire*—which will *have* to be written and which are beyond the caprice of the dramatist. So with the active symbol as found in Æschylus and Shakespeare.

"If I succeed in creating human beings," Maeterlinck claims, " and if I allow them to act in my soul as freely and as naturally as they would act in the universe, it may be that their actions would absolutely contradict the primitive truth which was in me, and of which I believe them to be the offspring; and yet I am certain that they are right in their opposition to this temporary

truth and to me, and that their contradiction is the mysterious daughter of a more profound and more essential truth."

Maeterlinck's active symbol, therefore, is one as inexorable as fate—one before which it were best to remain silent, watching its mysterious ways which have to be fathomed, listening to the messages which it might bring from out the inner life.* Active as it is, this symbol—this image with its organic life—is much nearer the universe, since it obeys law more profoundly than man, who opposes because of his abstract knowledge of justice. The symbol is always right. "If I listen," declares Maeterlinck, "it is the universe and eternal order which thinks in my place, and, without fatigue, I shall go beyond myself. If I resist, one might say that I am struggling against God."

This brings us into the realm of re-

*See Matthew Arnold's "The Buried Life."

ligion, where the symbol is ever present. Maeterlinck courted the unseen, whereas his friend Van Lerberghe always possessed a religious fear of mystery. But before the symbol Maeterlinck bowed in humble alertness, not in any fear. Passive in body before it, he was yet keenly alive to every variation of its inward unfolding. This contemplation made him seek silence and solitude, not as a hater of society, like Van Lerberghe, but as a philosopher better able than others to observe those actions and reactions of outward life which are moved by the hidden law of things.

Both Carlyle and Goethe were followers of the Swiss adage, "Sprechen ist silbern, Schweigen ist golden"; Carlyle transmuted it into distinctive significance, "Speech is of Time, Silence is of Eternity." But Maeterlinck found out that the *static* exposition of life is inconsistent, and even Carlyle found that it took many volumes of characteristic speech to expound

his philosophy of silence. It is well to believe that we are on the verge of revelation; the symbol affords the spirit room to stretch. Creeds, therefore, that worship in restricted formalism, lose sight of Carlyle's statement regarding Jesus of Nazareth as the divinest symbol: "Higher has the human Thought not yet reached: this is Christianity and Christendom; a symbol of quite perennial, infinite character; whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest."*

As yet, in Maeterlinck, there was no manifestation of that mediævalism which later took hold of him; of that strictly scientific interest in modern thought which was soon to colour his essays. He was an impressionist dabbling in the impressionist's art, and sensing a truth which was, after a deeper reading of the mystics,

*See "Sartor Resartus," Book III., Chap. III.: Symbols.

to escape the indefinite emotionalism which the decadent symbolists affected. In "Serres Chaudes," he assumed a literary pose which soon became an obsession with him, passing from iteration and a quick succession of images—alike used by Van Lerberghe and the Japanese—to mere shadow dramas which kept the same low grade of emotion, created by what Richard Hovey* deemed to be the most effective use of parallelism since the days of the Hebrews.

In "The Treasure of the Humble," Maeterlinck asserts that " a poem draws the nearer to beauty and to loftier truth in the measure that it eliminates words that merely explain the action, and substitutes for them others that reveal, not the so-called 'soul-state,' but I know not what intangible and unceasing striving of the soul towards its own beauty and truth."

*See Hovey, Richard: *Nineteenth Century,* March, 1895, pp. 491-96.

Maurice Maeterlinck

It is difficult to believe that Maeterlinck had that high object which is at the basis of wisdom and which characterizes the seer, when he was under the full influence of the "Cymbalists." His one claim to originality in "Serres Chaudes" rested in the effective way he laid on images which were not complimentary, and which were in no way essential. Through a psychology which permeated morbid things, he discovered a principle of art which exploited the seen only that it might suggest the unseen.

He had a long way to travel before a "fad" became a theory with him, and before this theory passed into a more tenable philosophy. His symbol was once farthest removed from experience; before it, he considered human thought as secondary. But he learned differently from Emerson in later years—Emerson the transcendentalist, who nevertheless bade the poet hold symbols lightly. "All sym-

bols are fluxional,"—thus speaks the Sage of Concord—"all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead."

Maeterlinck was not always to dwell in the symbols of his youth, any more than he was destined to remain within the shadow of death. Yet he was not to depart from his method in his volume following the publication of "Serres Chaudes" in 1889. The fact is that his formless poems were simply artistic notes for his formless dramas to come. As Van Bever says, they begin a cycle which ends with "Aglavaine et Sélysette" on the drama side, and which takes a new departure in "The Treasure of the Humble."

"Serres Chaudes"* is a blind groping after something felt; it is revolutionary in that Maeterlinck, with Van Lerberghe and

*First published in 1889; Paris: Vanier. Georges Minne, illustrator, 1900, Bruxelles: P. Lacomblez.

his other associates, asked no sanction of convention. Free verse and free emotion were the mandates of the school. In some respects, like Sidney Lanier, they aimed for a peculiar verbal music that paid no thought to such formalism as made Tennyson lyrical; in other respects they were as uncouth in expression, as Walt Whitman, without possessing any of his big-souled democracy. The appeal was made directly to the senses, not by systematized thought, but by rapidly projected images which stood alone, yet which aimed to be drawn together, producing definite impression. A jumble of such impressions leaves one in subtle mood; there is no questioning as to whether the mood is right or not. These poets painted mood for its own sake, and a stagnant oppressiveness was the result. The poetic outlines are essences out of which tragedy might come.

Such indefiniteness Maeterlinck slowly outgrew, and the change became so appar-

ent that one critic declared the relationship between "Serres Chaudes" and "Wisdom and Destiny" to be that existing between poison and antidote. Maeterlinck escaped the corroding effect of the morbidness characterizing this school, though he carried with him the romanticism and peculiar symbolism born of it. His friend, Van Lerberghe,* died in 1908, a victim of that disheartened outlook which comes with asceticism on one hand and with misdirected emotionalism on the other.

For the Jesuit training at college made greater impress on Van Lerberghe than on Maeterlinck.† The latter could never have written a canticle on the Immaculate Conception, the former could never have

*Van L. was author of "Les Flaireurs," "Chanson d'Eve," which was set to music by Gabriel Fauré, and "Pan."

†See references: Alfred Vallette: "Maurice Maeterlinck et Charles Van Lerberghe," *Mercure de France, Oct.,* 1890; Albert Mockel: "Charles Van Lerberghe," *Soc. Mercure de France,* April, 1904, 50:5-33 (Bibliography); *Mercure de France,* XXVI: 227-28; XXX: 793; XXXI: 258; L: 575-76.

been so independent in thought. Maeterlinck felt himself free to express emotion freely; Van Lerberghe, with the same care in the use of delicate language, amidst the same art atmosphere and Nature, was more given to classicism. For that reason, the Jesuit Fathers were at first more willing to accept Van Lerberghe than Maeterlinck.

But no sooner had Rossetti and Burne-Jones won these two than the Jesuit spirit frowned upon them. Because the two sang of death in "Les Flaireurs" and in "L'Intruse," people called these friends imitators, but, as I have said, they did not influence each other so much as they were influenced by the same things—a Botticelli or a Pre-Raphaelite. Where they departed was in the practice of their art. Maeterlinck's whole "marionette" conception was based on an adherence to violence; that is why, in his small dramas, he made so much of outward accessory—the same detail

that brought Poe's tales to the point of horror. Maeterlinck's legendary heroines lived in fever, Van Lerberghe's in seductive calm. The difference in concepts between the two was a difference in solidity; the one shadowy and atmospheric, the other, as Albert Mockel says, like Fra Angelico, without his ecstasy. Van Lerberghe was a scholar, but one whose thought was turned away from the general current of progress.* He was a stoic, permitting no compromises either with himself or for the sake of the public; he was an obscurist, believing that the truest is the least understood; he was a dreamer in the religious sense; and his love for science found outlet in a metaphysical philosophy that could not be applied. The world was an allegory to him, and abstract beauty, like pure reason, was the real thing. He was a man without a particle

*Maeterlinck wrote on Van Lerberghe for the *Figaro*.

of sympathy with the human. Yet of Maeterlinck he always wrote with affection.*

"Serres Chaudes" represents the groping of a soul trying to find itself—overpowered by destiny, discouraged by darkness, sickened, made restless and faint with strange hallucinations. Out of such pools of emotion came dim shadows of persons whose hearts beat, yet whose hands melted in unreality. During 1896, fifteen songs† by Maeterlinck were published, containing much of ballad treatment, with dramatic touches due to that repetition, that parallelism, which Hovey praised. Those hothouse flowers of Maeterlinck's fevered

*See letter to Van Bever, May 13, 1904. He also wrote an appreciation of "Serres Chaudes" in Albert Mockel's *Wallonie.*

†Illustrated by Charles Dondelet; Paris: Gande. Contained also in Lecomblez's 1900 ed. of "Serres Chaudes." Twelve of these songs were translated by Martin Schütze and published in a limited ed., 1902, by Ralph Fletcher Seymour, with an Introduction. See Hovey's translation of "Et s'il revenait un jour" in "Last Songs of Vagabondia," as well as Mary J. Serrano's translations in *Critic,* 41:543-56.

brain were the forced blossoms of youthful self-consciousness; they came from no stress of soul, but from an attitude of the artist toward art. Maeterlinck's growth began when he found that he needs must grope in order to collect himself. Thus early, he was dimly conscious of an interior life, even as Van Lerberghe was happiest while listening to an interior music. But as yet, Maeterlinck was not ready to accept any interior morality. Poe himself never created more fragile or more sickly poetry than is to be found in "Serres Chaudes."

Henley has written verses in hospital, but none so reeking with the ether of half-consciousness. Maeterlinck, the artist, almost speaks inarticulately, as phantoms push their way through fumes of morbidity. Only fevered brains have such terrors; the soul is in continual ennui, and it likens itself to inanimate Nature which suffers in the same fashion as mortals. Leaves

die of fever, and the stars have parched lips of longing. Strange plants there are in this early garden of Maeterlinck. Amidst ice and snow, and rains that deny fruitfulness, maidens water ferns near poisonous grottoes in which lurk women who sleep, mayhap never to wake again. The symbol is clearer in those scènes which occur in "The Blue Bird" ("L'Oiseau Bleu"), dealing with the luxuries and the illnesses of the world.

The brain may grow its weeds, and blossom forth queer flowers of remorse; red stems of hate may fringe the horizon of dreams; love may offer its verdant fields as well as the dim shadows of its inaccessible lanes. These are the "Serres Chaudes" of Maeterlinck, wherein the foliage of the heart is strange, though none the less exuding of oppressive odors. Pleasures unfold like water-lilies; desires bend like palms that find reflection in a lake man calls his soul. In such a garden,

white prayers float toward the crystal blue —a blue that hangs over us bell-shaped, with sounds of life within like tones of unintelligible music.

What kind are the flowers that bloom in a soul that burns? Before him pass roses of dead hopes, bathed in the dew of a heavy spirit. Strange vapours rise in the mind, and armies clash in the night of one's soul. Those who move in such lagoons and marshes are the most feeble, the most sick. Within the soul, there are strange towers in which mystic abstractions die of thirst. In one poem, Maeterlinck writes:

> Il y a un long chemin de mon cœur à mon âme!
> Et toutes les sentinelles sont mortes à leur poste!
> [It is a long way from my heart to my soul!
> And every sentinel is dead at his post!]

What is the vista in the suburbs of such a soul?

"One Sunday morn the hemlock was cut down,
And from the convent could be seen to pass
Strange vessels on the sea—

A day of fasting and a sunlit day!
While the swans drooped beneath a loathsome bridge;
The trees around the prison were pruned down.
One afternoon in June they carried medicine,
And food for the sick was spread beneath the sky."

These far-fetched and unrelated pictures produce a disagreeable sensation, but they none the less have an aroma peculiarly their own; they court a lassitude that not only affects the human quality of the poetry, but the landscape as well. The soul is peopled with strange animals of hate and lies; we pursue and are pursued. Sin is likened to a yellow dog; temptations flock like sheep. Sometimes a faint flash of beauty affords a lyric strain, pure in the midst of impure atmosphere. The soul cries out:

"Have pity on my prayers,
Feeble flowers in a glass of water!"

The warmth of sunlight does not warm in these poems; the moon spreads white coldness and shadow through the soul. What so terrible as the hospital of a fe-

vered brain! Assuredly, if there be any truth or sincerity in the poetry of Maurice Maeterlinck, if these images came from him, they measured the heavy and dragged travail of a spirit only dimly realizing itself. These pictures make a veritable bramble bush, now a forest of wounded, again an oriental verdure in a grotto of ice. Far down in a coal mine strange vegetation finds root; in the dark recesses of one's soul, strange passions sprout—passions that later, in their full luxuriousness, become enemies to the soul.

Such sombreness is in direct contrast with Maeterlinck's later philosophy. These pale ballads are cries of anguish without reason; the soul bleeds white blood of dreams. Seasons are mixed in a strange desire to have snow and ice cover fields that are green; figures are introduced, giving one feeble impressions of souls that have been resurrected from the dead. These poems are sense impressions. Re-

flections, visions, expectations, prayers, come forth in mistiness—inarticulate, uncanny, and without hope. The soul burns as the eyelids do in fever, and between hot and cold, one is destined to toss in torture. Spectre hands touch the tired brow, while the soul moves through a world of grotesque relationships.

"Serres Chaudes," therefore, while it can never be regarded as healthy or as beautiful, must be acknowledged as remarkable—a species of literary experimental psychology, affording hints of a treatment later to be utilized with such effect in "L'Intruse." Maeterlinck's simplicity of word structure is also here defined with clearness and in faint strokes. The first hint of occultism is felt in these half-formed verses—fevered shudders of a soul in distress, a mind outside of itself and talking of strange visions.

In the fifteen songs that followed later (1896), these shadows take more definite

shape, though still in meaning they are indefinite. Maeterlinck came out of the period of malaria with a theory he now sought to put into practice. The fact that this theory needed explanation made him write upon the subjects of static drama and of the buried life. He rose from the sick bed of "Serres Chaudes" with at least an object in view: to create a drama of the unexpressible in terms of the expressed.

The heroines of Maeterlinck's plays are sketched in these songs. The idea and symbol in the following poem shall recur in "The Seven Princesses" with fuller meaning.

"She has chained her within a grotto,
She has placed a sign on the gate;
The maiden has forgotten the light,
And the key has fallen into the sea.

"She waited the days of summer:
She waited more than seven years.—
Each year a traveller passed by.

"She waited the days of winter;
And while waiting, her hair
Recalled the light.

"It sought and found,
It slipped between stones,
And shone upon the rocks.

"One evening the traveller passed again.
He did not understand the light,
And dared not approach it.

"He believes it is a strange sign,
He believes it is a source of gold,
He believes it is the sport of angels,
He turns about and passes again."

There is more humanity than symbolism in "And If," so beautifully translated by Hovey. Though there is the ever-present golden ring, and the lamp and door, the symbol is clear and plain, the story poignant and definite. In the third song, we find strands of a philosophy which the "Treasure of the Humble" exploits. Three maids are killed, and in their hearts are found happiness, tenderness, and wretchedness. But from the blood of happiness springs a serpent; from tenderness, lambs; and from wretchedness, arch-angels. The mystic three is used to repletion, though it is decorative rather than significant.

In these songs, maids with blindfolded eyes seek their destinies, three blind sisters with lamps of gold climb towers, flames flicker before closed doors. Strange outward manifestations portend the action and reaction of strange undercurrents that spin silently and inevitably. It is the same Rossetti decorativeness used in the dramas. No better sketch of "Barbe-Bleue" than that in the simple lines—characteristic of the ballad form:

"The seven daughters of Orlamonde,
When the fairy was dead,
The seven daughters of Orlamonde,
Sought the doors.

"Their seven lamps have been lighted,
The towers are opened,
Four hundred halls unlocked,
Without finding the day. . . .

"They reach echoing grottoes,
And they descend;
And in a closed door,
They find a golden key.

"They see the ocean through the crevices,
And they fear to die;
They beat upon the closed door,
Without daring to open it. . . .

Maeterlinck's poetry has never changed in its outlines, in its simple form, in its ballad sentiment. Songs occur in "Aglavaine et Sélysette" and in "Sister Beatrice," but always the same song varied. I should say that as a poet of slight song, laden with mysticism, Maeterlinck is happiest when he is nearest tragedy, rather than when he is striving to express dank moods. His pale princesses, who seek in disordered manner, represent his blind gropings—gropings which were to find light through his great quality of an open soul wanting the light. Had I never seen the essays of Maeterlinck, I should have declared that the inertness of "Serres Chaudes" was not constitutional. His friends all dropped along the way, but Maurice Maeterlinck went on.

CHAPTER III

DRAMATIC THEORY AND PRACTICE

"What we see upon a stage is body and bodily action; what we are conscious of in reading is almost exclusively the mind, and its movements."—Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare."

I

IT is an easy matter for a writer gifted with the dramatic sense, to accept the beaten paths of the theatre; it is even easy to excel in a school which has been established through the dominant example of a master craftsman. German mysticism and the ferment characterizing the social history of modern Germany have influenced Hauptmann and Sudermann, but they were likewise followers of Ibsen. It was far more healthy for them that dramatic literature should adhere to the realism of Ibsen than to the naturalism of Zola; hence,

the problem play—or the externalizing of those laws governing society and the individual—became dominant on the stage.

Audiences were accustomed to Sardou in France, to the artificiality of Scribe, to the melodrama of Pixérécourt and Ducange,—a melodrama not unlike that of Kotzebue. More than a year has to pass, also, before such a force as Hugo or as Dumas can be discarded for a contracted stage and less heroic figures. In fact, the poets who were drawn to the theatre in the latter half of the nineteenth century did not forsake romanticism on a large scale. D'Annunzio, Stephen Phillips, and Rostand have not departed very far from old models.

A glance into stage history will show how very crude the handling of supernaturalism has always been; how literal Shakespeare's ghosts, how declamatory his witches. There is just reason in Charles Lamb's dislike for what he was prone to

call clap-trap visualizing—more so during his time than if he had lived in the present, when the psychology of the switchboard has been brought to such a height of perfection. If we start upon the principle that an actor can never escape the theatrical, can never measure the exact progress of an emotion, then the stage becomes "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Lamb abhorred the acting of Shakespeare's tragedies, since he gave them wholly the quality of mind and spirit, rather than of effective representation.

As a poet, Maeterlinck was nurtured, as we have seen, in a school of emotional romanticism—the same school that haled Poe, effectively translated by Mallarmé. From "Serres Chaudes," he learned the value of mood in art, and he now turned to the theatre, intent on creating emotional effect. This he did by strict adherence to *one* mood in which he persisted to so great an extent that critics deplored his gloom

and discussed him as a decadent. Nordau, ever on the alert for degeneracy, uttered a diatribe against the Ollendorfian dialogue, the gasping iteration which Maeterlinck used.

But in determining Maeterlinck's dramatic theory, we must remember that our approach is from within, outward; that the soul speaks inarticulately, uttering half-sounds which none the less represent whole states. When a dramatist selects to deal with broken minds, with phantom people, with unusual surrounding,—when he does all in his power to depart from the normal, then he must look upon his scene, not with the healthy eye of himself, but with the jaundiced eye of his characters. Shakespeare depicts distraction in a way akin to the Elizabethan manner of art; Maeterlinck, in a different current, selects another, using Shakespeare and his contemporaries as models.

His art spirit, nevertheless, was float-

ing in ether when he turned to the theatre, but though we must discount much of his theory, even as he himself later discounted it, we have no justification in scoring it as Francisque Sarcey did.* For this much Maeterlinck has proven by his misty marionette dramas: that the unseen is potent and is largely determined by the value of speech, by the quiet inevitability of the scene. There was nothing new in his persistent resorting to dark backgrounds against which his characters shone luminous. But whereas Spenser's "Faery Queen" was luxuriant in its allegory and in its natural setting, Maeterlinck's "The Princess Maleine" is formal and significantly isolated in its objective arrangement. In a night, as it were, he became a manipulator of meteors and constellations, as strange forebodings of imminent events. "We feel," writes Mr. Archer,†

*See "Forty Years at the Theatre," 1893.

†See "A Pessimistic Playwright," *Fortnightly*, 56:346; 1891. Archer suggests that one compare

"as though the poet were trying to appal us with a trump lantern at the top of a pole." In creating this supernaturalism, therefore, the machinery in Maeterlinck's dramas becomes disconcerting to the spectator and wearing upon his nerves. The marionette plays are nervous whenever they seek to escape action.

But above all things, Maeterlinck's chief contribution to modern drama has been his insistence upon depicting man's attitude in the presence of eternity and mystery—"to attempt to unveil the eternal character hidden under the accidental characteristics of the lover, the father, and the husband."

Hence, the accidental elements in Maeterlinck's stage pictures are kept simple, his one desire being to have the essence felt. Before the infinite, our modern

with "Maleine" the tragedy which he attributes to Webster, but which Schelling in "Elizabethan Drama" assigns to Tourneur,—"Atheist's Tragedy." See Schelling, 1:564.

theatre must stand in humbleness for the real secret of life. But since "inward perspectives . . . disappear before the footlights," shall not the theatre merely be used as an accessory, and shall not the theatre's accessories themselves be reduced merely to the lowest and most passive terms? Words and ideas expressed can never be full value of the force behind them, but the poet must suggest that force, if he has the power. And it is this power which is the peculiar forte of Maurice Maeterlinck. Behind sensuous reality lurks the real drama of this marionette theatre; behind the word lies the real meaning of life. Hence, Maeterlinck very well represents the spiritual restlessness of the age which is conscious of unseen force, but which is not quite sure of its direction or of its expression.*

*Soissons, S. C. de: "Maeterlinck as a Reformer of the Drama." *Contemp. Rev.*, Nov., 1904, 86: 699-708.

Maeterlinck: "The Modern Drama." *Cornhill Mag.*, 80:166-73. "Double Garden," pp. 115-35.

Outward life is but symbol of the inner life,* and it is the outward scientific probing which is enriching our knowledge of the unknown. Maeterlinck's advance in dramatic theory† must therefore be followed along experimental lines, for he is no dogmatist, however much he may think along the same high plane of philosophy. He is not much troubled with the dramaturgic laws of Aristotle. His theory of drama changes with his own change; the man and the artist are essentially one.‡

Soissons sees in modern symbolism the old mysticism explained away by science, and since "Maeterlinck's ideas are identi-

*D. M. J.: "Maurice Maeterlinck: Mystic and Dramatist." *Westminster Rev.,* April, 1899, 151:409.

†Hills, E. C.: "The Evolution of Maeterlinck's Dramatic Theory." Colorado Coll. Pub., v. 2, pp. 29-40. Lang. Ser., no. 18.

Jervey, H.: "Maeterlinck *vs.* the Conventional Drama." *Sewanee Rev.,* 11:187, Apr., 1903.

‡Henderson, A.: "Maeterlinck as a Dramatic Artist." *Sewanee Rev.,* 12:207.

Symons, Arthur: "Plays, Acting, and Music"; "A Theory of the Stage."

cal with the results of scientific experiment," it is necessary to emphasize in man "the mysterious and unfathomable side." At first, Maeterlinck approached his task in the *spirit* of the Greek, with the *technique* of the romanticist. He learned the elements of form from Shakespeare, and cast "The Princess Maleine" in that form, but he disposed of, in fact, ignored man's character in its opposition to fate. Later he was to put man's will against the forces of life, and he was to realize that character was destiny.*

Maeterlinck's theatre, therefore, begins with weakness, for in the face of destiny man is helpless, and his greatest hope in reconciling the forces of fate rests in his passiveness to a power so vastly more powerful than himself. The very year that Mirbeau hailed Maeterlinck in the *Figaro,* the latter declared his artistic principles in

*See "L'Ornement des noces spirituelles." Intro., xxi.

*La Jeune Belgique.** "Art," he wrote, "is a temporary mask, under which the unknown without a face, puzzles us. It is the substance of eternity, introduced within us by a distillation of infinity. . . . A dramatic poem was a work of art, and bore the charming characteristics of such a work, but a spectacle on the stage suddenly frightened the swans from the pond, and threw the pearls into bottomless depths: the mystic transparency of a work of art disappeared. King Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet should not be performed. Something of Hamlet dies as soon as we see him dying on the stage."

This quality that acting robs from art never returns, even though one again seeks communion with art; the stage kills a masterpiece, for the very reason that accidental and human elements are inimical to the

*See *La Jeune Belgique,* 1890, No. 9, "Menus propos, Le Théâtre."

symbol—that symbol "which cannot bear the active presence of a man." Maeterlinck was thoroughly in accord with the Greeks who used a mask in tragedy; this heightened the value of the active symbol; it allowed that inward unfolding which outward action usually interrupts and over-accentuates.

Hence, Maeterlinck's esthetic creed finds further expression in these words: "A poem which I see on the stage seems to me always a lie; in everyday life I must see man, who speaks to me, because the majority of his words have no meaning at all without his presence; a poem, on the contrary, is a gathering of such unusual words, that the presence of the poet is connected with them forever; one cannot free from voluntary slavery a soul dearer than others, in order to replace it by the manifestations of another soul, almost always insignificant, for in that moment it is im-

possible to assimilate those manifestations."

But at the same time that Maeterlinck was interesting himself in the unknown forces of life, he was likewise picturing an opalescent feminism that was new to the stage, even though Ophelia and Princess Maleine are near relatives. How to depict the frail body in the toils of the forces of life was this Belgian's problem, for if one examine closely all of his heroines, it will be realized how true it is that childhood seems all the more frail in the throes of passion, and, as one critic declared, too recently come from the freedom of the infinite.

Maeterlinck was very much concerned in his theory of drama, so much so that he sought on all occasions to explain his methods—as earnestly as Poe described, in "The Philosophy of Composition," how he constructed "The Raven." The preface to the "marionette" plays fully sets

forth Maeterlinck's detestation of the actor, who reproduces the ordinary life of the character he portrays, rather than the superior life the poet had in mind. The supreme mission of art is to reveal the infinite. Thus early the bee enters Maeterlinck's prose:

"It is necessary," he writes, "that art act as the bees. They do not carry to the larvæ of the beehive the flowers of the fields which contain their future and their life. The larvæ die under these flowers without suspecting anything. It is necessary that the nutritive bees carry to these blind nymphs the very soul of these flowers, and it is only then that they find in this mysterious honey, without knowing it, the substance for the wings which one day shall carry them in their flight through space."

Now, the mystic density of a work of art disappears with representation, and Maeterlinck contends that such great

works as "Lear," "Hamlet," "Othello," and "Macbeth" are not able to be acted for the very reason that a great poem which deals primarily with humanity does not rely on scene for its effect. Once let the prince escape the portals of imagination, and he ceases "to live according to the most secret beauty of our soul." Hence, one has to speak of the Hamlet of dreams, and the Hamlet of the stage—two wholly different beings living through different mediums.

It is significant how persistently Maeterlinck strove to give expression to that new beauty which he wanted the stage to inherit.* In his introduction, written to Alfred Sutro's "The Cave of Illusion," he has advanced beyond that hazy confusion with which he first went about expressing the unexpressed. Here, he recognized that stage technique must change in order to accommodate the change in mind which

*William Archer: "Maeterlinck and Mystery," *Critic*, 37:220.

was taking place. He realized that a revolution in thought was being effected, but as a reformer Maeterlinck was ever a believer in evolution. If he began as an iconoclast, he used no more violent corrective than his shadowy expressions of the over-soul.

Therefore, Maeterlinck pictures the poet in this introduction as conscious of change, yet doubtful how best to alter expression in order to suit it. The poet does not yet know "under what forms and conditions, and according to what laws, the higher powers, the unintelligible influences, the fundamental laws, act upon our destinies. A moment having arrived at which he cannot loyally postulate the anciently accepted powers, while those which are to replace them are not yet fixed and have as yet no name, the poet hesitates, gropes in darkness, and dares not sally forth from the refuge of the mere lyric."

There are three phases of art, there-

fore, that we must seek in the dramas of Maeterlinck. Verbal beauty must be of a distinctly impressionistic value; Nature and our emotions must be analyzed and carefully depicted; and finally, as the atmospheric life of the whole poem, the unknown must actively surround the persons a poet creates, giving them an activity apart from their worldly interests. One might draw a diagram of those life forces which Maeterlinck began with—Love, Jealousy, Fear—and approach his marionette theory with this picture in mind:

"His shield of life is a field sable; its flag floats forever at half-mast high. The escutcheon of love is a twilight emblazoned with dying flames: Death might be imagined as a gateway into the mist; the record of Time is marked as the hours of the dial only by the shadow that passes until the shadow itself is lost in the night."*

*"M. Maeterlinck, Moralist and Artist." *Edinburgh Rev.*, Apr., 1901, 193:350-77.

II

Maeterlinck had Charles Lamb as chief supporter of his theory that real masterpieces abhor an actor, but he went further and attempted by the most slender action to create the spell of the unseen, to show by outward repression how tense the inward force of destiny was. All things were in the hands of fate, and his cry was that "the wisdom of man lies in not attempting to change the course of destiny." This is the passiveness one finds in the marionette plays, unvarying until "Aglavaine et Sélysette" is reached. Instead of flesh and blood, his theatre is one of shadow; his characters are not real, but romantic phantoms.

He gained his effects by the persistent use of gloom, by the strict adherence to symbols which recognized no realistic characterization, and by the lyric strain of terror, of tender pity that borders on tragedy and that is born of mystery. In his

dramas, a critic writes, "the motives are the *clairvoyance* of old age, the presentiment of death, the almost prophetic insight of simple women and of children, the revealing aspect of the soul. . . ." His heroines are as powerless as those in the fairy tales, but though he sings of death, there is even in his pessimism a strong desire to push aside the veil; and the pessimism is all the more poignant, since Maeterlinck at this period regards the task as almost beyond human power. The philosophy too has a slight tinge of irresponsibility about it, because no human will, according to his belief at the time, could change the course of destiny. In what manner we are playthings of fate, his marionette dramas prove. As one writer claims: "Something of the literal and positive Latin spirit in him corrects the transcendentalism of the Teuton, and behind his mediæval *mise-en-scène,* with its ruined

turrets, errant damsels, and names out of old Kelt romance, what disengages itself is the form and pressure of our actual life."

In "The Treasure of the Humble" there are two essays which still further intensify Maeterlinck's dramatic theory. Tragedy for him is no longer to be found in great adventure, but in the life of every day. Heretofore, drama had contented itself with the struggle of man against man, of desire against desire; but there is even a greater spectacle of "the soul, self-contained in the midst of ever restless immensities." Man and his destiny are above reason and sentiment; man deviating from truth is of more interest to Maeterlinck than the lover strangling his mistress. These are the considerations that should be placed first and valued above action. Life quickens in silence; deep forces are set vibrating in repose. Hence, Maeter-

linck asks: "Is life always at its sublimest in a kiss? . . . Does the soul only flower on nights of storm?" Depth, intensity, spiritual gravity—the struggles attendant upon these, struggles which happen at any period of the day—are man's true concern. The theatre is learning, so thought Maeterlinck in "The Tragical in Daily Life," to go farthest away from bloodshed, and to seek for the silent tears of inward weeping. The old way of violence is primitive. Was not a moving-picture representation of "Macbeth" stopped by the police of Chicago, because its action was too violent?

It is a noble province Maeterlinck gives to the theatre—the power of revelation. He becomes disappointed whenever the stage fails to show him something of that presence, power, or God which surrounds him in his daily life. "I was yearning for one of the strange moments of a higher life that flit unperceived through my

dreariest hours." And now we reach Maeterlinck's fullest expression of the *static* drama, when, after claiming that Othello does not have the august life of Hamlet, he writes:

"I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows, and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny—an old man, who conceives not that all the powers of this world, like so many heedful servants, are mingling and keeping vigil in his room, who suspects not that the very sun itself is supporting in space the little table against which he leans, or that every star in heaven and every fibre of the soul are directly concerned in the movement of an eyelid that closes, or a thought

that springs to birth—I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or 'the husband who avenges his honour.' "

Maeterlinck simply asserted his belief in the truth of his static drama, and as instances of its existence outside of his own marionette plays, he cited the motionless tragedies of Æschylus. His theatre may not be true according to conventional ideas of drama, but, according to the eternal verities, it is true. Modern drama supports psychological action—the effect of forces due to outward causes on the inward man. But diminish the psychological action even as you have the material action, and one deals with life itself rather than with special moments. The silent laws of existence have yet to be utilized, like undertones and overtones in music.

Maeterlinck's ardor blinded him to the fact that the theatre is not slow moving like the mind; that it cannot turn back; that life must flow through pictures, since it is a seeable art, not represented in pigments, but by real beings. Abolish the actor, and you no longer have the theatre that has come down through the ages, appealing to crowds rather than to the individual. Nevertheless, by his plea Maeterlinck added something new; he indicated to the dramatist wherein it was his special province to be poetic. Maeterlinck's art is truly like experimental chemistry; his psychology demands a full knowledge of the agents and re-agents of life.

He grants us this: that there is a necessary dialogue to carry the action. But the action grew out of the real life of the drama, and "the only words that count in the play are those that at first seemed useless, for it is therein that the essence lies." Maeterlinck is therefore disciple of

Wordsworth: "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." There are moments in drama when soul speaks to soul, when unexpected forces stay the hand.

This secondary dialogue, which to Maeterlinck is primary,—this shadow of speech,—is best seen in Ibsen's "The Master Builder."* Maeterlinck recognizes the trivial surface of this play, with its deeper current which is strange and profound. Events beyond the caprice of stage technique have compelled Ibsen to say things other than the things he wants, for, according to Maeterlinck, "Hilda and Solness are . . . the first characters in drama who feel, for an instant, that they are living in the atmosphere of the soul." No matter what may be the ordinary speech of friends, if they have each caught sight of the other's attitude toward universal life, nought can be hidden between

*For Maeterlinck on Ibsen, see *Figaro,* 1894.

them, however trivial the spoken word. The outer dialogue holds the inner. Thus it seems to Maeterlinck, concerning Ibsen's "The Master Builder," which he calls a somnambulistic drama. This is a difficult technique, and the obscurist who makes use of it should be held critically accountable for full knowledge of the life forces from whence it comes.

In "The Treasure of the Humble," Maeterlinck makes further advance by challenging the fatality of which he had once stood in awe. This, he says in "The Star," is the distinguishing note of the new theatre. Why should we deal with the effects of disaster, when disaster itself needs to be analyzed; since it affects us directly? Our latest tragic actors, he contends, see disaster nearer than the Greeks did. Mystery may be the same, but we are more conscious of its presence than they. The nature of will is as yet not clear to him, but he believes that often instinct warns

and the action of destiny is thus averted.

Maeterlinck's theory of the drama is only a dramatic treatment of his philosophy; as he broadened in the latter, so he broadened in the former. In most of his essays we find statements regarding his attitude; everywhere we note him questioning life in terms of the awakening soul, and condemning drama that ignores such considerations. He is honest with himself. He dislikes "Othello" because of its interest in the outcome of jealousy; he condemns Racine because, even though he deals with women knowingly, he does not really know women. "Racine's characters," he says in "The Treasure of the Humble" ("The Awakening of the Soul") "have no knowledge of themselves beyond the words by which they express themselves, and not one of these words can pierce the dykes that keep back the sea. . . . *If they were to be silent, they would cease to be.*" The italics are mine, inasmuch as I believe here

one really reaches the value of Maeterlinck's *static* theory. Life does not cease to be when silence falls upon the soul. Even the greatest tragedies written for the stage do not satisfy Maeterlinck's demands; though the Greeks claimed that their heroes bowed before fate, Maeterlinck believes that the ancient hero never attacked destiny; rather did he oppose wisdom. "Wisdom," he writes, "has will power sufficient to rectify all that does not deal death to the body." Hence, we rarely see the real sage on the boards, yet only by his presence may we hope to have a drama of wisdom. Later we shall see why it is that Maeterlinck speaks of Hamlet thinking much, but being by no means wise.

III

"Le Tragique Quotidien" at the same time established a theory of life and a theory of art; hence, from now on Maeterlinck was intent on correlating the two.

In fathoming the depths of justice and mystery, he makes constant reference to drama, and in "The Buried Temple" such a statement as the following prepares the way for his next advance in the theatre: "Dramas which deal with unconscious creatures, whom their own feebleness oppresses and their own desires overcome, excite our interest and arouse our pity; but the veritable drama, the one which probes to the heart of things and grapples with important truths,—our own personal drama, in a word, which forever hangs over our life,—is the one wherein the strong, intelligent, and conscious commit errors, faults, and crimes which are almost inevitable; wherein the wise and upright struggle with all-powerful calamity, with forces destructive to wisdom and virtue."

The static drama here takes unto itself a new element, and ceases to be static. Whether Maeterlinck would have reached his next conclusion without the aid of

Georgette Leblanc is futile speculation; we know for a fact that her presence created a change in him. The consequence is that though he still recognized that the distinguishing mark of modern drama was "the creeping paralysis of external action," nevertheless, he was now convinced that action is necessary. Modern drama means an intensifying of life, a deeper penetration of human consciousness. There is a spiritual courage that is above the courage of adventure, and this spiritual courage must be expressed by outward activity. This change in attitude is bound to affect our whole view of ancient literature, which no longer appeals to us in the old way. Young people love, but not in the manner of Romeo; the latter experiences nought but a simple love-story, weighted beneath the beautiful trappings of romanticism. Instead of these exterior decorations, the modern poet has new forces upon which to rely.

These views are set forth in an essay on "The Modern Drama" contained in "The Double Garden." The playhouse of to-day is stranger to the ancient method, even though we still have the hidden protagonists—love, hatred, duty, goodness, pride, and the rest. The stage has been shorn of the ancient machinery of mystery, even though the unknown still surrounds us. It would seem at first that modern drama had been robbed of its attractive ornament, but we soon realize that psychology and moral problems take the place of this exterior decoration. But if this be so, we find Maeterlinck keenly conscious of the new demand made upon the dramatist, in view of the fact that drama is so closely allied to the philosophy of life. What he now writes should be placed in comparison with his ideas on the *static* drama:

"To penetrate deeply into human consciousness is the privilege, even the duty of

the thinker, the moralist, the historian, novelist, and to a degree, of the lyrical poet; but not of the dramatist. Whatever the temptation, he dare not sink into inactivity, become mere philosopher or observer. Do what one will, discover what marvels one may, the sovereign law of the stage, its essential demand, will always be *action.*"

Maeterlinck therefore recognizes a difference between the spectator and the thinker, between the individual and the crowd waiting for something to happen. Hence once more, he refutes the essential elements of his static theatre when he adds:

"There are no words so profound, so noble and admirable, but they will soon weary us if they leave the situation unchanged, if they lead to no action, bring about no decisive conflict, or hasten no definite solution."

If this action can no longer be obtained

through violence of external scene, then it must come from passion in conflict with moral law; in other words, most of our modern dramatists deal with the struggle between desire and duty. In crude form, this movement began with Dumas, *fils*, and in Dumas fashion dominates the French stage to-day—problems far different and far less poignant than those discussed by such men as Björnson, Hauptmann, and Ibsen. The modern drama demands enlightened consciousness, yet the deeper we penetrate, the less apt are we to find sources for theatrical struggle. It might almost be said, therefore, that in the modern playhouse wisdom is to be avoided, inasmuch as to wisdom all desire and all duty are clear. From this moral quiescence or peace, no drama may come.

But inasmuch as Maeterlinck is a disciple of the theatre and is also a disciple of wisdom, he has become intent on finding elements for a new drama. Admire

Ibsen though he may, Maeterlinck recognizes in him an unhealthiness outside of illumined consciousness; he sees in the Ibsen theatre a species of morbid madness that is neither healthy nor invigorating. Strange that he who was himself so persistent an upholder of gloom should now turn against this gloom, even though in it he saw a savage beauty. Where he admires Ibsen is in the fact that in him there is no vestige "of the violently illumined dramas of antiquity or of the Renaissance."

The theatre of marionettes has therefore become a theatre of noble action, created by man's struggle against himself and against ignorance. It is almost inevitable, if we live the life of ideal consciousness, that with the disappearance of struggle there will ensue the drama of peace—what Maeterlinck calls a theatre "of beauty without tears." Toward this consummation we must all strive, and therefore our

stage to-day should deal with those higher duties that lead humanity to charity and justice.

Maeterlinck's development is consistent, but being a philosopher as well as a poet, it is two-fold and almost coincident. His mystic philosophy runs throughout his plays, and it is a question whether the dramatist was not an outcome of the thinker. Leneveu, in his treatise on Maeterlinck, discusses his occultism before analyzing his dramaturgy, but inasmuch as the Belgian first came into prominence on the stage, it is well to take him chronologically. And after all, he was so much a philosopher in his poetry and so much a poet in his philosophy, that a first consideration of either phase will assuredly throw light and understanding on a later discussion of the other.

Maeterlinck's philosophy has advanced from darkness into light, from abstractness into scientific analysis; his drama has

advanced from shadow into flesh and blood. In neither case has he been loathe to change his mind. It is not that he is too variable, for his growth is not from extreme to extreme. Time has now come for us to note Maeterlinck's practice in the several phases of his development as a dramatist. Hence, we go back once more, and begin where, as Leneveu says, "by touches of light and shade, he projects his characters, and his vision penetrates them like Roentgen rays."

CHAPTER IV

THE MARIONETTE DRAMAS

"It is only after hinting at many of the things which he had to say in these plays, which have, after all, been a kind of subterfuge, that Maeterlinck has cared, or been able to speak with the direct utterance of the essays. And what may seem curious is that this prose of the essays, which is the prose of a doctrine, is incomparably more beautiful than the prose of the plays, which was the prose of an art.
—Arthur Symons.

I

THE understanding of Maeterlinck's small plays presents a double problem. Coming upon them with no knowledge of the character of their substance, they seem strangely morbid, unnecessarily humid, provokingly shadowy. They speak of unfamiliar powers about which we know nothing, they regard unreality with a persistency that is disconcerting, they offer a

rarefied ether that is almost stifling. In all of this maze of Rossetti poses, there lurks the personality of Maurice Maeterlinck himself. By the time one has become accustomed to his disconnected dialogue, and has reached the conclusion that he has been given drama dealing with intangible forces, one is then led to see that the rudimentary philosophy which, in the dramas, Maeterlinck turns into mystic atmosphere, is personal conviction rather than dramatic effect. The consequence is that should the reader advance from reading the marionette plays to reading "Le Trésor des Humbles," he would recognize Maeterlinck as advancing from behind the cloak of a poet to the open position of a philosopher.

But, on the other hand, should one come upon the little plays after having scaled the heights of idealism outlined in Maeterlinck's essays, these shadowy compositions would appear nothing more nor less

than compounded of stray chips of a philosophy, later expressed in more definite terms. As a dramatist, he was a man without a system, but as a philosopher, he bound the separate strands of belief into pronounced declarations, into well-defined attitudes.

His early plays deal with death; what is more, they depict mere children wandering in a vale of tears. Maeterlinck is no realist, and neither the psychology of his characters nor the accessories of his scenes would prompt one to call him optimistic. His dialogue has a dual power, as Ségur has pointed out, of contrasting the apparent calm of the action with the tempest of destiny which is imminent. The least that could be said of them is that they contain no ray of brightness; the most that they are perfect examples of tragedy in essence. Maeterlinck is a symbolist, a philosopher meditating, an artist with eyes for the incongruous. Octave Mirbeau was un-

wise in hailing the Belgian poet as a veritable Belgian Shakespeare. For only a casual contrast of the two would emphasize the humanity of the one and the total unreality of the other. Shakespeare dealt with human life in its varied human aspects; Maeterlinck assumes that life is governed by what a writer has termed vast impersonal factors.

These marionette plays deal with love, fear, and jealousy as the true active agents of the plot. Maeterlinck shows very well, through the mere facility of his dialogue, that souls may move unseen, yet be powerful protagonists. There are some who are prone to accuse Maeterlinck of agnosticism; his later writings fairly well refute that statement, however much mere form may have made him cautious in the expression of his belief. The ether in which his characters move is one of great mystery—and the greater this mystery becomes, the more futile seems human life to

cope with it. That is why his marionette people seem so small, so thin, so fragile. Theirs is the tragedy of a prescience stronger than their feeble minds can stand.

These faint flowers cannot abide over-interpretation; they are much more readily felt than explained. Maeterlinck wilfully places thought in shadow, and one only half grasps in accepting the whole. The marionette plays cannot stand over-analysis, for their structure is web-like, and life pulses faintly through fine tissue. Granville Barker, when he wrote of this series of dramas, declared his dislike of "pointing out beauties," and I agree with him where there is so little substance to grasp. But I cannot agree with him in the belief that Maeterlinck's marionette dramas are deprived of existence on the boards simply because there is no medium now used fit to grace their delicacy. Mr. Barker* would

*See Gowans's Copyright Series, No. 2, "Three Plays by Maeterlinck"; Introduction by H. Granville Barker. Stokes, 1911; London: Gowans &

blame the theatre, believing that these plays constitute real art. But while in their clairvoyance they carry effect, they are more for the mind than for the eye. Maeterlinck's scenes are pictures, and there is not enough variety of pantomime to tell the story. They are dramas of few moods —and these moods always in the negative key. There is no relief of vision, though there are changing shades of wisdom, of attitude, and of acceptances.

One would not desecrate the frail phantoms by describing them in detail. They represent, in their presence, a mediæval color, but they personify, in their mystic touches, fundamental elements in life. They are submissive—otherwise Maeterlinck's theatre would not be *static*—and all

Gray, 1911. "Alladine and Palomides," "Interior," and "The Death of Tintagiles" were published in 1894 under the title, "Three Little Dramas for Marionettes." The first was issued by Duckworth & Co., in 1899; "Interior" first appeared in London in *The New Review,* 1894; and "Tintagiles" in *The Pageant,* 1896. [See also Gowan's *International Library,* Nos. 11, 20, 26, and 28.]

critics agree that they "minimise human responsibility." But though in "Wisdom and Destiny"—which is an excellent text-book on Maeterlinck—there is a statement disproving an *inner* fatality, to the effect that "Wisdom has will power sufficient to rectify all that does not deal death to the body," this will power never finds expression in the marionette dramas. One could never unfold adequately or theatrically *the peace of full enlightenment,* yet Maeterlinck would probably explain his mysticism, whether in prose or in verse, by looking for the higher truth. He has claimed that there is no drama extant wherein the sage finds a place. *Hamlet* thinks, but he is in no way wise; his soul is not lofty like that of Marcus Aurelius, nor has he the abiding wisdom of Christ.

We might take such opinions as these in "Wisdom and Destiny" and apply them to the marionette plays, wherein souls, not in possession of consciousness, are not mas-

ters of their fate, because they are not masters of themselves. To reduce them to mere stories would change their quality. They are dependent upon atmosphere; that is why Mrs. Patrick Campbell acted "Pélléas et Mélisande" behind gauze, making literal what was never intended to be anything more than spiritual.

I would not go as far as Mr. Barker in claiming that these plays transcend theatre technique; rather is it true that as much as possible they ignore theatre technique. In the French they are musical, yet Maeterlinck is the most unmusical of men, leaving to his wife the details relating to those dramas of his which are used as librettos. Approaching his theatre, after reading his essays, however, I should consider his marionette plays as measure of his philosophical incompleteness at the time they were written. There is no thought in them that is not carried further, and that has not fuller and saner expression in the es-

says. Yet the quality and texture of the plays are not to be denied.

II

I like to think of Maeterlinck using a handpress in order to print twenty copies of "La Princesse Maleine";* the idea lends a mediæval touch to this, his first appearance in drama. And as we are all human, the young poet may be forgiven the pride with which he forwarded the results to members of the French Academy.

*"La Princesse Maleine" was published, Gand: Louis Van Melle, 1889. See Octave Mirbeau, Paris *Figaro,* August 24, 1890; also Iwan Gilkin in *Jeune Belgique. Cf.* Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ulalume," and "The Haunted Palace." See Hall Caine's introduction, in an ed. of the play, translated by William Wilson, 1892. There is an edition of "La Princesse Maleine" translated by Gerard Harry and included with "L'Intruse," translated by William Wilson, in a volume to which there is an introduction by Hall Caine (Heinemann, 1892). For reviews, see *Critic,* June 22, 1895, 451-53 (I. Zangwill); *Academy,* March 19, 1892, 41: 270-72 (William Sharp), and *Fortn.,* Sept., 1891, 56: 346-54 (William Archer).

With the sheets still damp, no doubt, he hastened the first copy to Mallarmé. But it was not until August 24, 1890, the day when the *Figaro* appeared, that Maurice Maeterlinck was officially hailed. Then it was that Octave Mirbeau wrote his oft-quoted opinion.

"I know nothing of M. Maurice Maeterlinck," he said; "I do not know who he is, or what he is,—whether he is old or young, rich or poor. I only know that no one is more unknown than he, and I know also that he has written a masterpiece.* . . . He has given us the most brilliant work of this period, and the most ex-

*The omitted passage runs: "non pas un chef-d'œuvre étiqueté chef-d'œuvre à l'avance, comme en publient tous les jours nos jeunes maîtres, chantés sur tous les tous de la glapissante lyre—ou plutôt de la glapissante flute contemporaine; mais un admirable et pur éternal chef-d'œuvre, un chef-d'œuvre qui suffit à immortaliser un nom et à faire bénir ce nom par tous les affamés du beau et du grand; un chef-d'œuvre comme les artistes honnêtes et tourmentés, parfois, aux heures d'enthousiasme, ont rêvé d'en écrire un et comme ils n'en ont écrit aucun jusqu'ici."

traordinary and naïve also, comparable—dare I say it?—superior in beauty to the most beautiful in Shakespeare."

Had Maeterlinck been other than himself and had he been other than Flemish, he might have been disconcerted by such fulsome praise, but his friends marked that he did not step from his reserve at all. Probably he realized that "La Princesse Maleine" was a decided advance over "Serres Chaudes." He had set out to illustrate a theory of playwriting, and he had very well succeeded. But all the more he drew within himself, to follow more fully the ideas and the technique which mark him as so original. These fragments of spiritual incompleteness could scarcely abide an actor, yet, however affected they may seem, after one has become accustomed to Maeterlinck's mannerism, they nevertheless strike one as being sincere.

"La Princesse Maleine" contains a formal beauty, and an interior atmosphere

which words create without expressing full coherence. Maeterlinck's love of terror is not final with him; it is simply the common terror which surrounds all those who have not attained complete wisdom. If death overtakes life and conquers, it is only a way Maeterlinck has of showing how much we are playthings in the hands of external events. Starting with *Maleine*, we shall have a long coterie of women upon whom Maeterlinck has lavished his profoundest thoughts. Through them, he has become distinctively the poet of feminism. It is never quite clear why Maeterlinck wished to build his art upon despair, but it is understandable why he wished to illustrate a theory of art.*

*In tracing Maeterlinck's friendships, as I have attempted to do on p. 13, Appendix B, it were well to record his dedications to the marionette plays: "L'Intruse" was addressed to Edmond Picard; "Les Aveugles" to Charles Van Lerberghe; "Alladine et Palomides" to Camille Mauclair; "Pélléas et Mélisande" to Octave Mirbeau; "L'Intérieur" to Mme. Sara de Swart; and "La Mort de Tintagiles" to A. F. Lugné-Poë.

The actors were puzzled when they came to study their parts in the marionette plays, —there was so much to think over, so little to do. For the frame-work of all the dramas is so simple, while the main theme might be stated in a few words. It is when Maeterlinck, through his character, questions destiny, when he himself is in a quandary about life, that the mind must pause to argue out a philosophical distinction. Nearly all of "Home" gains effect through the sure and steady flow of outward events, and through the powerlessness of circumstances to check them.

Wherever Maeterlinck becomes conscious of situation in "La Princesse Maleine," he shows reminiscent touches of Shakespeare, as in the opening scene which is a veritable reproduction of the Elsinore platform scene in "Hamlet." It is a strange mixture, this, of things we have read elsewhere; it is not original in any of the points by which we usually measure

original standards in literature. In phrases, one can detect a fondness for Browning, a taste later to be prominently illustrated in "Monna Vanna." "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Romeo and Juliet" have been generously drawn upon. What is more, in "La Princesse Maleine" there are incipient evidences of his other plays; thus early, one glimpses "Pélléas et Mélisande," and from such a thought as "evils are not asleep" may have been born a scene for "L'Oiseau Bleu."

But, taking these imitative touches for granted; considering also that "La Princesse Maleine," sickled over with the pale caste of thought, gives forth vapours akin to Poe,—the originality of the piece lies in its power to create, through restless simplicity and simpleness, the impression of states of soul through which his characters pass. First of all, by this play, Maeterlinck established something more than impressionism, something profounder than

feeling. Through suggestion, he worked powerfully upon the imagination of the reader, making use of mannerism of speech and mechanism of outward detail to gain his effect.

The play loses much in its length, in its fragmentary scenes, in its monotones. The constructive arrangement of "Alladine et Palomides" is less complicated. Amidst a mass of useless details and repetitions, we obtain, however, a persistent tragedy that moves inevitably to its end. Here are two kings and a vindictive, deposed queen on one hand, with two princesses and a prince on the other. The two kings quarrel, and one, the father of *Maleine,* is killed in battle; in fact, the whole of *Marcellus's* land is laid waste, and *Maleine,* once the betrothed of *Prince Hjalmar,* is made an orphan, and is sent on the highway of life to seek her haven. But *Queen Anne,* always a schemer, contrives a match between *Prince Hjalmar* and her daugh-

ter, *Uglyane* (a most suggestive name), while she practices wiles upon the *Prince's* father. Into such an atmosphere wanders *Maleine,* who becomes a maid-servant to *Uglyane.* But when the *Prince* is seen of her, simple as she is, she makes herself known, and the old fire of *Hjalmar's* love returns.

What then, is the main story of "La Princesse Maleine"? One which deals with *Queen Anne's* steady revenge, her attempts to poison the girl, her final success in strangling her. She is much the type of the *Queen-mother* to *Hamlet,* while in *Maleine* there is kinship to *Ophelia.* When, finally, *Maleine* is discovered, stark and cold in her room, with the noose around her neck, then we have the Shakespearean dissolution. *Hjalmar* stabs *Queen Anne,* instantly turning the dagger upon himself, while the *King,* now worn with age, chatters incoherently, having lost courage in doing the direful deed, and passing from

the terror of *Macbeth* into the distraughtness of *Lear*. Maeterlinck has even adopted the Shakespearean point of rest, commented upon by Coventry Patmore in an analysis of "Hamlet." *Hjalmar's* friend, *Angus,* is the one sane character of the drama.

There is nothing particularly original in this outline, but the manner of treatment is the thing that is unusual. The dialogue is saturated with nervous tension, and with seemingly affected repetitions. Something awful is imminent, whatever the scene. Strange comets dart across darkened skies, eclipses portend disaster, characters move in stagnant atmosphere, and seem to sicken through lack of red blood and healthy outlook. In the midst of these details come beautiful thoughts, lyrical in expression, as when *Hjalmar* speaks of his memory of *Maleine*: "It was as though one were suddenly in a great pool of fresh water."

Maeterlinck's nervous tension is cumulative; it never abates, it never balances with relief. Situation after situation in "La Princesse Maleine" is simply introduced for momentary effect, as the motive of the madman—trite and weird at the moment, but significant when *Maleine* is dead and courtiers suspect him of the deed. This transference of suspicion, even for an instant, makes more poignant the *King's* after confession.

Maleine is an eery princess; one hardly knows from whence she came. She is pale, with no will in her, save during that instant when she keeps *Uglyane* from trysting with *Hjalmar,* and goes herself. She is paler than *Mélisande,* but nevertheless related to her. This much is evident when the text of the drama is examined carefully: in "La Princesse Maleine" are to be found all the conventions of the Maeterlinckean drama, with some of the crude morbidity of "Serres Chaudes."

The *Seven Nuns* become later "The Seven Princesses," with much the same decorative object, and appear again in the Seven Sisters of *Palomides*. The detail is not as simple as in "L'Intruse," or "L'Intérieur," but it is just as inconsequential. To indicate the feeling of terror in his characters, Maeterlinck's observation wanders among objects that will produce the effect. He accomplishes this result with a nicety that no other modern dramatist possesses. Cypresses wave strangely in the dark, making almost human gestures against significant skies; fountains spout at critical moments, and leave off playing when least expected. Strange knocks, as theatrical as *Hilda's* knocking in "The Master Builder," result in shudders, but in no outcome.

These unnecessary and widely separate interests usually afford a minimum of aid to the plot, but they further the psychological impression of inevitable catastro-

phe. *Maleine's* terror alone in her room with *Pluto,* the dog, is a minute unfolding of everyone's terror while conjuring up grotesqueness in the dark. Maeterlinck summons to his assistance every disaster of Nature that he can conceive, and his method is the same from "La Princesse Maleine" to "Monna Vanna." As Huneker says, the lines bite at times, and "there are great fissures of silence."

Thus early we hear Maeterlinck on love. When *Maleine* meets *Hjalmar* in the place of *Uglyane,* the two are only made aware of possible disaster. They do not burn with any of the fire of *Joyzelle;* their feeling has none of the flame of passion. They are more or less slaves to the fleeting moment; they are more or less spectral.

In W. L. Courtney's "The Idea of Tragedy," there occurs this significant passage: "In Maeterlinck . . . you find the conclusion that man is the play-

thing, the sport of destiny. At all events this is true of Maeterlinck's earlier dramas, where the human figure is so faintly drawn that the notion of spontaneity or freedom is absurd. . . . If you reduce human vitality to a thin, almost incorporeal vapour; if, instead of human beings that have length, breadth and thickness, you have frescoes on a wall, it is absurd to ask if things like these can alter their fates, or recognize that the supreme fate lies in their character." It is this sense of vitality which separates Ibsen and Maeterlinck.

Now, in Maeterlinck's dramas there is either the restlessness of old age as a requisite, or the wisdom of old age as a contrast. It is as necessary to the canvas that there be grey hair and a white flowing beard, as that mystic numerical groups act in unison. In "La Princesse Maleine," old *King Hjalmar* loses whatever vitality he may possess in the terror which seizes his

soul. In "L'Intruse" (1890),* Maeterlinck devotes himself to a study of the restlessness of old age, and adds thereto, a preliminary sketch of blindness, later to be used in "Les Aveugles" with such clinical exactness. There are two canvases which should be placed side by side—the interior study of "L'Intruse" with the exterior picture of "L'Intérieur." One is from the inside out, the other from the outside in, and the effects are gained in the same manner, though "L'Intruse" externalizes the unseeable, while "L'Intérieur" spiritualizes that which is seen.

As we have said, the reason why Maeterlinck's "L'Intruse" has been so persist-

*"L'Intruse" was first published in 1890: Bruxelles, Louis van Melle. It was used before this in *La Wallonie*, in which, also, Van Lerberghe's "Les Flaireurs" appeared. It was played at the Théâtre d'Art on May 21, 1891, for the benefit of Paul Verlaine and Gauguin, the painter. Among the actors was Lugné-Poë. Consult Archer: *Fortn. Rev.*, 56: 346-54, Sept., 1891. In America, the play was given by the students of Franklin Sargent's Academy of Dramatic Art, at the Berkeley Lyceum, New York, Feb. 21, 1893, and Jan. 18, 1894.

ently connected with Charles Van Lerberghe's legend, "Les Flaireurs," is because of their mutual insistence upon the irresistible power of death. But, whereas Van Lerberghe possessed a fear of mystery, Maeterlinck was quite resigned to fatality, even though his characters were restive at its approach. In fact, through his calmness Maeterlinck, the artist, was able to double on the emotional value of his dramas. In "L'Intruse," there is not only the terror of approaching death, experienced by those seated in a room, but there is likewise created a terror which is purely the result of the terror of others. What is more, in order to emphasize the power of these impersonal forces, which we call life or death or love or jealousy, he places in the centre of the whirling vortex, timid, gentle, faintly lined figures, totally incapable of meeting crises.

In the midst of a silence that vibrates with anxiety and dread, a family of six

await news from a sick room adjoining. Therein lies a mother, who has given birth to a waxen baby, and who struggles in pain against the approach of death. The old grandfather, blind and nervously senile, is the agitator of the little drama. Though he cannot see, he may feel, and by that feeling he may predict. Through forty-five pages of quick dialogue, the reader is carried into the very throes of agony and suspense. The flicker of a lamp, the shadow of a leaf, the significance of a whisper, the wail of a bird,—all combine to show that something is in the air, beyond the ken of this group, and outside the power of their control. The grandfather works them up to a tension; he suspects that something is wrong in the sick-room, and though ostensibly they are waiting for the arrival of a Mother Superior who is a relative of the sick woman, we know they await the approach of death.

These throbs of terror beat with regu-

larity throughout the text. Maeterlinck's dialogue has relative values, as an orchestra has values measured by the different qualities of musical instruments. Small points are barely touched upon, yet in the mention of swans frightened by nothing, of dogs that fail to bark when they should, of silences that in the common course of things should be full of sound, and of doors that are opened by no one—by the mention of these things, Maeterlinck creates such suggestion that the mind sees no limits to which it would not go.

The grandfather may be old,—and "age has a right to be strange"—but his anxiety succeeds in making the others near him fear that something is wrong. We are thoroughly impressed with the feeling of powerlessness which exists in the grandfather. "L'Intruse" is a modern play, but all vestige of outward familiarity is lost in the spiritual restlessness of the characters. They expect something, and in his blind-

ness the old man suspicions everything. To him, voices sound strange, and this strangeness is interpreted as something imminent; he hears people entering the room, yet no one comes. He is pitifully alone, for the others see, and he feels that they are deceiving him. Every now and then there are little practical, every-day utterances, but these only serve to accentuate how immense the unseen force which slowly creeps to the sick-room. Then comes midnight, with the moon, and a faint rising of someone. There follows a wail from the waxen child who has never cried before, and the faltering of this group, as a Sister of Charity, amidst terrible silence, announces that the mother is dead. They all hasten from the room, leaving the grandfather.

This is the story of "L'Intruse," shorn of its Maeterlinckean excellence. There is no more symbolism here than one finds in any utterance. It is simple and futile, representing a philosophy which Maeter-

linck was later to refute. The end of life is not annihilation, even though the marionette dramas would prove to the contrary. But in this piece Maeterlinck went beyond the Greeks in his power of upholding a Greek convention,—so manœuvering as to make the presence of death evident throughout the scene. Had anyone before Maeterlinck succeeded so well in handling these intangible forces? I think not, and it is because of this excellence in him—this opening a world of spiritual presence to the dramatist, through actual technique as well as through philosophy, that I would consider him such a force in modern drama.

There is quality to Maeterlinck's feeling, even as there is quality to the touch of a blind man; there are degrees of sightlessness, as there are different intensities of light. Where "Les Aveugles"* is

*"Les Aveugles" (1890) was first performed by Lugné-Poë and his company at the Théâtre d'Art on Dec. 7, 1891. It was presented at the Berkeley

distinctive is in this very power of measuring quality, of making us understand that even in an asylum, the blind man who can distinguish light from shadow is infinitely more fortunate than he who cannot. But there is also a definite symbol in this elementary tale. The manner of restlessness is the same as in "L'Intruse," the sickly character of the scene akin to that of "La Princesse Maleine." Like them also, the action here could not well dispense with the dialogue, whereas the action is not necessary to the understanding of the dialogue. The outward movement is almost *static,* and the sense impressions of the reader alone progress. To externalize this play, to reproduce it on the stage, would be futile, inasmuch as it is statuesque.

Lyceum, New York, on Feb. 21, 1893, and Jan. 18, 1894. Some critics would contrast this with Breughel le Vieux's "Parabole des Aveugles." It is to be noted here that after this, the next piece of work undertaken by Maeterlinck was the translation of Ruysbroeck.

The *dramatis personæ* are six blind men of varying ages and of varying degrees of blindness.* These are seated to the right of an old priest, who has to his left six women in similar plight as the men. The priest is dead in their midst, though these afflicted people know it not, and believe that he has gone from them only to return. The psychological motive of the dramatic fragment, therefore, deals with the restlessness of these helpless mortals, as their fear increases. They have been led away from their asylum, and there is no one to lead them back. But soon they discover the dead man in their midst, a dog having given them the first clue. This dog, and the infant child of one of the blind women who is mad, are the only ones who have sight, and they are most unable to lead these folk back to harbor.

From this, the symbolism is easily

*Sculptor L. Taft has based a marble group upon this conception of Maeterlinck. See *Chautauquan*, 54:442-47.

stated. For the church is often a dead thing among men too blind to recognize it as dead and not caring much about the way one treads alone, one gropes in darkness, hoping against hope to find some day a haven of rest. Wonderful as it is in its effect, "Les Aveugles" is artificial in its arrangement. The details are so closely identified with Maeterlinck that his *static* scene almost falls into the sphere of mathematical arrangement.

Gruesomeness being the atmosphere of prime consideration, the poet wanders to any lengths for a shudder, and he wanders many times into absurdities. Here, his scene is a Norland forest, "with an eternal look," which might puzzle a scene painter as it startles the mind; though, as far as feeling is concerned, we understand what is meant. There is a dog in "Les Aveugles" as there was in "La Princesse Maleine," and he is just as nervous in each

case, furnishing for each situation the clue for the discovery of death.

There is no solution for this fragment of a piece. By the end, we know the degree of affliction each person has; each is distinguished by some characteristic mark which indicates the extent of his blindness. This simple treatment is filled with silence and with sound; its form is almost without purpose, so free the dialogue from logical progression. It presents the same terror to be found in "L'Intérieur" and "L'Intruse," yet it is more mystic than either. But this much it does suggest: that Maeterlinck was at the parting of the ways as regards his philosophical attitude toward life. Often readers have asked: Did not the blind people return safely to the asylum; did the child amongst them who could see aid them in their blind groping to return? And even now, after his advance from darkness to light, after his own spiritual wandering and scientific in-

vestigations, Maeterlinck is still wise regarding the solution of "Les Aveugles." That meaning must be reached according to the faith of the person reading the play.

This is all most unsatisfactory as drama; it is provokingly mystic for the stage and would prove tiresome in its one key for the actor to attempt. Maeterlinck's method was that of the musician, of the painter. There is no iconoclasm of thought here, but an iconoclasm of detail. He dramatized the five senses, and, as Helen Keller has done in a more hopeful manner, he made of blindness a sixth sense. As for this dead faith among blind men, we shall see later how much of it was Maeterlinck's personal rejection of the conventional church. Taken in this light, "Les Aveugles" is significant in the development of Maurice Maeterlinck.*

*See Leneveu: "Ibsen et Maeterlinck," III, p. 269, *seq.*

These dramas contain haunting sentences and phrases. First they are illustrative of close study of the defects in Nature. Says one blind man, "The voice has a different sound when you look at anyone fixedly." Says another: "When there is sunlight, I see a blue line under my eyelids." Even in such shadowy realms, unlocated in actuality, Maeterlinck preaches that it is the business of the blind to know where they are. The young blind girl, whose presence is pitifully lyric and who is of the same color as *Mélisande,* has memories which are clearer when she does not think upon them, for she, in her time, has seen. Every now and then these sightless beings utter expressions which point to materialism. But however faulty they are in their essential gloom, Maeterlinck's marionette dramas are all spiritualized. They give you Rossetti groupings as in "Les Sept Princesses," but once the stage is set, he transfers his attention to

the inner states. This presents an eery effect, and the result is that Maeterlinck's first plays are more fairy than human. His dialogue simply explains the condition of his *static* theatre.

"Les Sept Princesses" (1891)* was founded upon a poem contained in "Serres Chaudes." It is a tapestry picture, in which all the emotion of the observers is used to give value to the interior picture. In this point, it is not unlike "L'Intérieur." It is filled with reminiscent touches of the poet of early days, even reflecting a little of the romance of the short poem known in English as "And If." The very arrangement of the scene suggests tableaux or living pictures, and the restless concentration of attention upon the seventh prin-

*Published, Bruxelles, Lacomblez, 1891. First translated by Richard Hovey. A version by Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke is found in *Poet-Lore*, 1894, 6: 29-32; 87-93; 150-61. Given a production at the Berkeley Lyceum, Feb. 21, 1893; Jan. 18, 1894.

cess suggests that something unusual has happened to her. The *Prince* who comes to claim one of his seven cousins is of the same proportions as *Hjalmar,* and the old *King* and *Queen,* sadly distraught, are of the same mental calibre as *King Hjalmar.* "Les Sept Princesses" is simply another illustration of Maeterlinck's power to suggest the unusual by misplacement of the usual. These three look through the window at the sleeping princesses within a room or hall, graced with mirrors and a long flight of seven marble steps. These fair, white, slender girls are sleeping beauties, waiting to be awakened, but one has waited too long, and it is upon this one that the strangeness of the drama falls.

Gradually, the *Queen's* nervousness increases to immense proportions; her vision becomes as terrifying as that of the *Grandfather* in "L'Intruse." It is surely a trick that Maeterlinck plays so often, so delicately, so effectively. By the slightest sense

he is able to suggest what Henry James considers is so difficult to catch in literature—a recognition of the passage of time, of the flow of distance. He does not attempt to excuse the unnaturalness of the objects that act for him; in fact his characters often act without reason, since, to the Maeterlinck of this period, fatality defies reason.

These spectral princesses behind glass are uncanny. Maeterlinck's women either have the long hair of sick people, or their faces bear the pallor of death. The *Queen* more and more works herself up to mad frenzy, until the reader fairly feels the poor souls of these helpless princesses whirled in a mighty force beyond human power. Yet, amidst all this anxiety, they sleep, they hardly stir, and most assuredly there is something wrong with *Ursula,* the seventh girl. The *King* tries to comfort his *Queen,* but all to no avail. Hence, the young *Prince* is sent through vaults,

dark with dread, to a movable slab in the floor; he is to discover the real truth of the sleeping princesses. And while he is gone, the old couple keep watch at the window. Then the suspense becomes doubled; they wait, they watch, they fear, they tremble, and finally the slab gives way at the moment that six of the princesses open their eyes and rise simultaneously. It is *Ursula* who does not stir. The *Queen* is in frenzy as she sees the *Prince* touch the bare arm of the prostrate girl. Then there is consternation, tableaux, and a black curtain falls brusquely to cut off the general terror and tumult.

There is no fatality in this; it is mere picture, and as a mere picture it is deeply romantic. It is in no way human as "L'Intérieur" is human. Yet the method of treatment is just the same. Maeterlinck's dramas are delicate vapours blown into being according to a theory of art. But I think that either the practice convinced him

finally of the impracticableness of spiritual situation on the stage, or else Madame Maeterlinck began to add substance to his shadows.

Based as it is upon the Dante episode of *Francesca da Rimini,* it is exquisitely beautiful and tender as a mere picture, but it still is devoid of the red human blood that was not to come until "Monna Vanna" proclaimed the full influence of Maeterlinck's wife.

"Pélléas et Mélisande" is pale and indefinite. It contains all the types illustrated in previous plays, and in a few scenes it mounts up to real dramatic value, as when *Yniold,* like the child in Marion Crawford's version of the *Francesca* legend, spies upon the two lovers, repeating all he sees to *Golaud.* It is the old, old tragedy of a youth falling in love with his brother's wife, and of the direful murder in the end.

Before Claude Debussy wrote his music for "Pélléas et Mélisande," he had composed many songs to the words of Rossetti, Verlaine, and Mallarmé; and even before he ever thought of turning to Mae-

terlinck, it was very evident to the musical world that he was attempting in music to produce the identical spiritual effects which the modern mystic poets were trying to reach by means of words and disjointed phrases. One feels this very strongly after reading Lawrence Gilman's concise and analytical examination of the new opera score,*—a critique which presents all that is necessary for the average music-lover to know.

The opera of "Pélléas et Mélisande" was written between 1893 and 1895, and was presented at the Opéra-Comique in Paris for the first time on April 30, 1902; it was followed the morning after by a storm of conflicting opinion. This was faintly echoed across the Atlantic, but

*"Debussy's Pélléas et Mélisande: A Guide to the Opera, by Lawrence Gilman. Schirmer. See also Mr. Gilman's review of the opera, *Harp. Wk.*, 52: 25. The opera was presented at Covent Garden (London), during the season of 1910. Other premières are Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, Jan. 9, 1907; Frankfort, April 19, 1907.

though it succeeded in subjecting Debussy to serious consideration abroad, the opera was passed over by the American impresarios, until Oscar Hammerstein added another daring move to his already daring attempt with Charpentier's "Louise"—which score had swung the pendulum back to ordinary life, interpreting upon the operatic stage what Maeterlinck tried to set forth in an essay on "Le Tragique Quotidien."

When the opera was first produced at the Manhattan Opera House on February 19, 1908, the public sat bewildered, for never before had the stage setting been so rare in its external beauty. The Nature element in "Pélléas et Mélisande" is as wild and as mystic as it is in Hauptmann's "The Sunken Bell," though its general structure and meaning are by far more simple. Yet so fraught are both with spiritual gloom that they fail to catch any of the glint of sunlight which decorates and

makes fresh the scenes in "As You Like it."

The same cast of principals as sang at the Opéra-Comique was again assembled at the Manhattan: Mary Garden, Gerville-Réache, Jean Perrier, and Hector Dufranne. Through twelve scenes, linked together by orchestral interludes which had been composed after the opera had been put into rehearsal in Paris, the hours sped on till midnight on that distinctive evening.

I do not intend to deal with the musical aspect of "Pélléas et Mélisande." Debussy is here used to point a moral. The musical critic declared that his anti-lyric attitude was retrogressive, and W. J. Henderson asserted his belief that the French opera of the future would be much closer to "Carmen" than to "Pélléas et Mélisande." But, granting that the step backward is almost to mediæval times, yet is there something of the Wagner disciple in Debussy.

Imbued with the idea of Maeterlinck's *infantile* drama, and considering to the full every limitation of his marionette theory and of his habit of contrasting youth with old age, as he does in nearly every one of his plays, Henry Krehbiel wrote:

"He who would enjoy the musical integument of this play must have cultivated a craving for dissonance in harmony, and find relish in combinations of tones that sting and blister and pain and outrage the ear."

From this it is not difficult to glean that if there is beauty at all in the orchestration, such beauty is born of a certain lawlessness, or at any rate a certain radical departure from the accepted canons of orchestration. And what Charles Henry Meltzer has said of the opera may as well be said of Maeterlinck and his libretto: "Where other composers would have sung, Debussy has sighed; where others might

have painted in bold, evident colors, he has only hinted at color."

Assuredly, as the audience sat there and heard the liquid run of harps during the scene in which *Mélisande's* wedding-ring splashes into the depths of the Fountain of the Blind, they must have been reminded of *Rautenderlein.* Probably the forest secret in "Siegfried," or the spirit of "Hänsel und Gretel" touched them, as *Golaud* first discovered the crownless, gold-haired princess of nowhere, a sleeping babe in the wood. And in the death-scene, so indicative of the childish simplicity with which Maeterlinck handles the inevitable forces of destiny, perhaps they further recognized semblances of that delicate, fragile *Hannele* of Hauptmann's spiritual poem.

The operatic score represented a clash of theories; dissonance set the formal ear on edge, yet at the same time gripped the soul with an intangible and undefinable ef-

fect. Debussy's "Pélléas et Mélisande" is thoroughly unmelodic; the Gregorian chant combinations form but a running musical commentary for the poetic text. Nowhere is there the seductiveness of "Tristan und Isolde." Even the *ensemble* is strikingly monotone, and the motives are difficult to follow without a close analysis of the score. Even to the uninitiated, Wagner is distinct and clear in this respect; he is both dynamic and subtle; his "Götterdammerung" is a joy of recurrent themes that enrich the entire Nibelungenlied Ring, and the emotional values throb in repetition at unerring moments.

Not so in Debussy's score.* You go away with no lingering arias, but with an indistinct effect, partly accentuated by an indefinite libretto. Doubtless such tonal mist is appropriate for the symbolic drama, but music is sufficiently illusive, suf-

*See *Le Théâtre,* June 11, 1902, No. 84; dealing fully with "Pélléas et Mélisande."

ficiently akin to soul-speech, without the necessity for creating a symbol within a symbol.) This absence of melodic voice opportunities has been defended by Debussy, and it demonstrates to what ends Maeterlinck's theory was carried.

"I desired," he is reported to have said, "that the action should never stop, that it should continue, uninterrupted. I aimed to dispense with superfluous musical phrases. On hearing a work, the audience is accustomed to experience two species of distinct emotions: the musical emotion on one hand, the emotion of character on the other. Generally, these are experienced successively. I have contended that these two emotions can be perfectly blended; that they are, in fact, simultaneous. Melody, if I may say so, is almost anti-lyric; it is powerless to explain the variableness of souls and of life; it is essentially suited to the *chanson,* which expresses a fixed sentiment. I have never consented to any-

thing in my music which, through technical requirement, would blunt or retard the development of the sentiment and passion in my characters. Melody disappears just as soon as one admits that, by its absence, it leaves the characters full liberty of movement, of voice, of joy, or of grief."

So that this opera of Debussy's, while more than an experiment, is as much above some of his early songs as "Pélléas et Mélisande" is above "Serres Chaudes." At least, it represents a theory, just as Maeterlinck has based the composition of his plays upon a theory which has shaped itself from a mere formless experiment into something of substance, passing from windy sighs and pregnant vacancies into human warmth and distinct delineation. Inasmuch as there has been, in the case of Maeterlinck, an ever-widening gulf between a theory conceived and a theory matured, so there will be a modification of Debussy's work, provided it goes

through a natural period of development.

It is a question as to whether or not this score of "Pélléas et Mélisande," despite a certain beauty in its wandering orchestral tendency, will not be lost to future generations. It is a curious score, but in no way a wonderful score. At one time, I had occasion to compile a music bibliography on "Francesca da Rimini." The number of operas founded upon the Dante love story was surprising: I traced Strepponi, Carlini, Generali, Mercadante, Gide, and countless others, mere names to the present generation. Even the orchestrations of Mancinelli, Rossini, Ambrose Thomas, Arthur Foote and Tschaikowsky, are only vaguely remembered and scarcely accounted of historic worth. To this list I am tempted to add Debussy's score, for, in the final analysis of "Pélléas et Mélisande," Maeterlinck has given us a faint Italian love-story from Dante.

Only a glimmer of the ill-feeling that

exists between Maeterlinck and Debussy has reached America, and it is not of much significance. Its source may be traced to the desire of the poet to have his wife sing the title rôle, or to the wish of the composer to have Mary Garden. But a more vital explanation would be that Maeterlinck disliked having his text cut in any particular to satisfy the demands of the operatic stage. The feeling ran so high that Maeterlinck openly expressed his hope that the music would fail, and he thereupon so arranged that Madame Maeterlinck now has the option always to assume the important female rôle in any opera based on her husband's libretto. It is well to record her appearance in Dukas's "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue" and in Fervrier's "Monna Vanna."

We understand some just causes for many technical disputes between the composer and the librettist of "Pélléas et Mélisande." The omission of certain significant

scenes points to their being beyond the lyrical scope of Debussy. The first scene of the first act is cut; its significance in the play is but to set the proper swing to the lines, and to suggest the ancient isolation of the castle. There is no musical treatment of the fourth scene to the second act, explaining the human causes which, with the workings of fate, keep the young lovers together. Then, there is the opening scene of the third act, in which, for the first and only time, *Pélléas* and *Mélisande* and *Yniold* are brought into bodily relation. Why it is that Debussy should have omitted this opportunity is hardly explainable. As the dialogue reads, the whole atmosphere here settles down to one of foreboding; the tragedy becomes imminent, and at this point it is felt to be inevitable to a stronger degree than anywhere else. There is a half-dreamy youthfulness in the situation, an innocence which is all so pitiful since it is so blind.

By this scene, which Debussy omits, we are able to foreshadow the poignancy of the prattle between *Yniold* and his father in the garden; by this, we are made to understand, on the entrance of *Golaud,* how mellow, how human his exclamation, "What children!" in a later act—a plaint emphasized in all the *Francesca* dramas of modern times, and which bestows upon the character, whether *Golaud* or *Gianciotto,* the bulk of our sympathy. The variety of themes here concentrated, and the failure of Debussy to treat them, lead to the inference that his skill as to thematic handling is limited; that his musical theory, with its monotone results, does not admit of diversified combinations for soul effects. In this respect, Maeterlinck's dominant mood would suggest his limitation where tone-color is concerned. The third scene of the fourth act creates the pastoral dream spirit surrounding *Yniold* and the *Shepherd;* innocence and loneli-

ness here become oppressive beside the gathering force of impending tragedy. A final omission is made of the first scene to the last act, a narrative, recitative passage, proclaiming desolation and fear.

Structurally, Debussy's score is full of shadows; we cannot say that ardour is expressed, it is merely suggested. There is no effect obtained directly; the solemn note, the brooding atmosphere, the fate chords, the simple clearness of feminine expression, the naïveté which the text so wonderfully upholds,—all these varying hints of changing psychological states are in some vague manner introduced and vaguely felt. I looked for the dominant characteristics of Maeterlinck's drama—the liquid spirit suffusing the lives of these half-real beings; I looked for a structural background of well-defined Nature variations, and of phrase repetitions in music as there were in dialogue. But I found nothing of these.

The orchestration undoubtedly possesses infinite beauties, finely suggested; the sense impressions are probably too fine, and confusion is therefore the result. But this much is certain: There is a man in California, a wizard of scientific gardening. We all know what Luther Burbank is doing in developing the infinite resources of Nature. Considering what science is made to accomplish in the modification of form, we dare not suggest the limitations, the finality of any physical condition. And so is it with drama. We have seen convention over-ridden; we have heard the declaration that the opportunities for effect are as manifold as the human varieties they represent. Debussy believes that beyond form, deep down in the soul of man, there dwells a tonal scale which, because it differs from the acknowledged scale in the balance of chord with chord, is none the less effective in orchestration—as much so as discord in Wagner. What matter musi-

cal restrictions of the past; if the subtle results are obtainable in other ways, if the *ensemble* is effective, then the composer is wise to experiment. In that respect, not only are Maeterlinck and Debussy reformers in the same way, but they have each proven, one by sound, the other by words, that there is a super-mystical stratum to music which had not heretofore been used.

It has been claimed that only by means of music can the full atmosphere of "Pélléas et Mélisande" be realized. Mrs. Patrick Campbell resorted to it in her production of Mackail's* translation of the

*Other translations were made by Richard Hovey, Laurence Alma Tadema, and the editors of *Poet-Lore*. The play in London was given at the Prince of Wales Theatre, June, 1898, and Mrs. Campbell was supported by Mr. Forbes-Robertson as *Golaud* and by Mr. Martin Harvey as *Pélléas*.

At a later period, both in London and America, Mrs. Campbell supported Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's *Pélléas*. See Max Beerbohm in the *Saturday Review*, June 25, 1898, and July 9, 1904. M. Lugné-Poë's company from L'Œuvre visited London in 1895, Mlle. Marthe Mellot appearing as *Pélléas* with

play. To gain effect, she resorted to the gauze curtain and to the music by Gabriel Fauré. But to attempt explaining the shadowy theatre of this dramatist by means of mass will be fraught with no results. He must be reached through the limitations of his theory, just as the finality of Debussy's position among musicians will be determined by the durability of his practice, and by how far his ideas will stand the test of consistent analysis. Here then is the close connection existing between the musician and the librettist; they both builded for themselves in their different arts; they both defied tradition and have been laughed to scorn by those who cannot see beyond the external excitation, and who cannot hear beyond the agreeableness of the *chanson.*

Yet, however pale "Pélléas et Mélisande" may be as a drama, I cannot agree

great effect. See Bernard Shaw in the *Saturday Review,* March 30, 1895. Francisque Sarcey ridiculed the play in his "Quarante Ans de Théâtre."

with William Sharp when he designates it as Maeterlinck's Sedan. There have been tragedies with more marked lines, with swifter and more violent action, but the very simplicity of all the beauty in this piece that deals with the love of two children only serves to accentuate the tragedy that takes place. I shall consider later the growth of the feminine element in Maeterlinck. But *Mélisande* is no better off in knowledge than *Maleine*. With her golden crown, when *Golaud* finds her in the woods, she is simply a fairy with no local habitation and with only a name. Fate seems to move unerringly from the time when *Mélisande's* wedding-ring slips from her finger into the fountain, and when *Golaud* discovers it, at the same moment first gaining suspicion of some unusual feeling in the air. Here is a lyric love-story with stray flecks of wisdom from *Arkël,* who, to be wise must be old. There is much of the garden atmosphere in the

play; there is a balcony scene, with none of the passion of "Romeo and Juliet," but with discovery bound up in the golden shower of *Mélisande's* hair. *Golaud's* advice to *Pélléas,* heightened by their visit together to the sickly vaults of the castle, is the one straightforward passage in the drama. But it is not a play of happiness; it is one of slow-moving melancholy in which *Golaud* is to be pitied for his knowledge and *Mélisande* to be pitied for her ignorance. Yet she walks to the brink knowingly and with desire, and, in the forest, *Golaud* comes upon them, slaying *Pélléas,* and wounding *Mélisande,* after he has pursued her through the wood in silence.

In the midst of the atmosphere of death, *Mélisande* gives birth to a child—"a little wax figure that must live in lamb's wool." *Golaud* truly loved this golden-haired princess, this fairy from nowhere. The blow he gave her came when it was most tragic,

but as the physician said, "She was born without reason . . . to die. and she dies without reason. . . ." This is the death scene, not of a woman, but of a soul. I agree with Dr. Slosson* that the best answer to those who would know what *Mélisande* means, is to quote *Arkël's* words at the last: "'Twas a poor little mysterious being, like everybody." And that is what Maeterlinck is trying to do, both in his drama and in his philosophy—to show the subtle forces affecting the soul of each and every mortal being.

It was after playing "Macbeth" at Saint-Wandrille Abbey that Madame Maeterlinck essayed to give an open-air performance of "Pélléas et Mélisande" in September, 1910. Her distinction between Maeterlinck and Shakespeare is found in her conviction that, however close to Nature the drama of "Macbeth" is placed, it still remains fiction, whereas "Pélléas et

**The Independent*, 70: 933 *seq.*

Mélisande" slips into natural surroundings as a diamond fits into its setting. "It seems," so she said, writing of the event afterwards, "as though all the glorious melancholy accidents that form the history of Saint-Wandrille had met throughout the centuries to build a natural and peerless cradle for Maeterlinck's work." Thus speaks the actress, who always refers to her husband by his surname, as though already he were among the immortals.

Here, then, was an attempt, on that evening when a few people were invited to Saint-Wandrille, to interpret this child tragedy in as natural a manner as possible. Real tears were shed, and the rain that fell only heightened the effect as *Mélisande* had to run to the Abbey from the forest, a distance of a quarter of a mile. It was all so living to the actress that she claims she lost every conscious power of the player, and, entering the soul of the child heroine, "formed a part of an ani-

mated and wonderful tapestry." And do we not realize how far Maeterlinck's cast of thought has control of her, in her final estimate of her bashfulness, when the performance was over; when—as she considered—the audience would have to be brought back to common existence? "How," she writes, "shall I dispel the illusion? The humble reality is my life; it is the little human will that dared to play with Nature, and all the great beauties of the earth."

Save for the fact that both in "Macbeth" and "Pélléas et Mélisande," the audience had to follow the scenes and action, across fields and from hall to hall, from room to room, carrying with them their camp-stools—an exertion which alone might dispel the illusion for most of us—save for this, the spatial appeal of the performance must have been notable. I quote an extract from the London *Times:*

"One of the chief advantages of this

natural over the artificial stage is, of course, the sense of space. Entrances and exits, instead of having the abrupt Jack-in-the-box air imposed on them in the usual theatre, instead of being, in short, stage-conventions, become realities, the gradual process beginning or ending in the actual distance. *Golaud* is seen tramping in full armor through the wood long before he comes upon the strayed *Mélisande* at the fountain. When *Golaud* brings his child-bride home you see the family at the castle, old *King Arkël, Queen Geneviève,* and the rest, gathered on the steps, and far off the torchlit wedding procession slowly wending its way towards them. The imaginary space and time of the story coincide with the real space and time. That is one cause of the perfect illusion. Another is peculiar to Saint-Wandrille; it is the perfect appropriateness of the building to the story enacted in and round it. *Mélisande* leans out of a casement in a tower, while

Pélléas coils her long hair round his throat. *Golaud* holds little *Yniold* up to the casement that he may report what the lovers are doing within. Well, here are the real tower and casement, as mediæval as you please, and further, there are all the real physical accidents of the situation. You have not to content yourself with being *told* by *Mélisande,* as she looks over *Pélléas's* shoulder, that she sees *Golaud,* with drawn sword, lurking in the depths of the wood; you can see him for yourself. And as *Pélléas* is stricken to death and *Mélisande* flees back to the castle, wailing out, '*Je n'ai pas de courage!*' you can hear her little feet pattering into the distance through the sodden grass. By the time this critical scene has been reached the audience has become hypnotized. When the guides summon us to follow them elsewhere we start as from a dream. That is the effect of the whole thing, the effect of a dream; and what is 'Pélléas et Méli-

sande' but a dream by a dreamer of beautiful dreams?"

Viewed from these many aspects, therefore, "Pélléas et Mélisande" is a Nature fairy tale as well as a melodic and poetic drama. And it becomes very evident to students, before they have read Ernest Newman's suggestive analysis of "Maeterlinck and Music,"* how similar the efforts of Wagner and Maeterlinck to sound the inner depths of the soul. From the standpoint of characterization, reason never touches *Mélisande*. In fact, these early heroines of Maeterlinck act through intuition, and, overpowered by sudden rise of feeling, show no will power or self-control. They are innocent up to the point of overwhelming desire; then they succumb, giving as their excuse that they cannot disobey the force that compels them onward. They feel no remorse; they

**Atlantic,* 88: 769-77, Dec., 1901; also read L. Gilman on "Maeterlinck in Music," *Harp. Wk.,* 50: 59.

bow before any consequence that may arise. Nevertheless, Maeterlinck has that control of his art which augments the atmosphere of fear, making innocence and human weakness like slender stalks in a flame of fire. When people would most laugh his mannerisms to scorn, they are held therefrom by a feeling that somewhere in the mist is the substance out of which souls are born to suffer. Unfortunately at this period, Maeterlinck rarely thought that they were born to be happy.

In "Alladine et Palomides"* we have a continuance of "Pélléas et Mélisande," even as the latter was a fuller treatment of "La Princesse Maleine." But we are relieved in the pale picture of femininity by

*"Alladine et Palomides," illustrated by Georges Minne, was published in Brussels, 1894 (Collection du Réveil; ed., Deman). See Alfred Sutro's introduction to this play when published in London. The American Academy of Dramatic Art gave a performance of the play on Feb. 18, 1896. Consult Symons's "An Apology for Puppets," in "Plays, Acting, and Music."

the stronger outlines of *Astolaine*. This *Princess* is the one forsaken by the *Prince* when he has glimpses of *Alladine* from Arcady—a child as innocent as the lamb that follows her, but who has within her all the fervor of a love born of she knows not what. The old *King Ablamore* loves *Alladine*, for "years do not separate hearts;" besides which, he is intent on having *Palomides*—a man of the outward pattern of the knight in "Sœur Béatrice"—marry *Astolaine*. But when the latter hears that the *Prince*, without much reason, has forsaken her to satisfy the primitive call of his undeveloped being, she exerts her efforts in the cause of these two inconsequent lovers whom *King Ablamore*, broken in mind, pursues with determination to punish profoundly. Maeterlinck knows but one way to punish; he thrusts his characters in dark vaults, stagnant and drear, approached by halls end-

less in length, and bounded by doors leading to unknown depths.

The vaults under *Ablamore's* castle, which itself is built in gloomy lands, are selected as the place of torture for *Alladine* and *Palomides*. Here they are brought, bound and blindfolded; here they struggle, in darkness and in tantalizing light, unmindful of what may happen to them at the slightest moment—a scene aiming to be as cumulatively breathless as Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum." And just as *Astolaine* and the Seven Sisters of *Palomides* come to rescue them, the two lovers are hurled backward into a moat in which *Alladine's* pet lamb had already met its death.

But they are rescued, only to be locked in separate rooms by *Ablamore,* who holds the keys. While the old *King* slumbers, these keys are taken from his palsied hands, and *Astolaine* goes with the Seven Sisters of *Palomides* to ferret out the mys-

tery. The *Prince* and the *Maid* from Arcady, while not dead, are on the verge of death. They call faintly to each other, and their words of love grow fainter with each call. Then, as in "L'Intruse," a nurse comes to each door and makes the sign of death.

The attitude of *Astolaine* represents Maeterlinck's philosophical attitude at the time. She says, "I can breathe with less disquietude, being no longer happy." Undoubtedly, the reader's sympathy is all centred upon this forsaken *Princess* who suffers silently and acts with generous spirit—the first real initiative in Maeterlinck's puppet plays. The dramatist's own voice rings throughout the dialogue. In his romantic conceptions, he never allows his characters to assume color of their own; he places them in his atmosphere, he presents them with his beliefs, no better measured than in *Ablamore's* opinion that "words have no sense when souls are

not within reach of each other;" he places them always in dark setting so that their slimness, their whiteness may the better be accentuated. It is a brooding sense—a shudder that is not healthy and that Maeterlinck soon outgrew.

Let us take for granted that Maeterlinck created this new shudder, even as Baudelaire created a new shudder. But he makes such repeated use of his gray tones that the mind becomes dulled. To read his marionette dramas in succession is like looking at canvases that deal with the same colors, and variations of the same theme. Maeterlinck irritates by reason of his monotony of psychology; he tires by the very puppet character of his men and women.

Examine "L'Intérieur" (1894),* the reverse of "L'Intruse." Two men outside a

*This play was first presented at the Théâtre de L'Œuvre in March, 1895, by Lugné-Poë. See I. Zangwill, *Critic*, 26: 451-53, June 22, 1895.

house look within the living-room, where a family is gathered in happiness, unmindful of approaching disaster. These two men have tidings that a daughter of yonder mother and father has just been drowned; in fact they are sent ahead of the tragic processional to give warning of its approach. Here then are forces at work —inevitable doom of a truth that no hesitation, no warding off can check. The fact is imminent and the girl is dead. But these two men hesitate; they plan how to break the news, they fear the silence that follows "the last words that announce woe." The picture is simple; it is somewhat Flemish; there are masterly strokes telling how the girl was drowned, gruesome as well as masterly. Yet those people through the window, living ordinary lives, are unconscious of what forces govern them. "Man understands only when it is too late." Then a granddaughter of the old man elected to break the news, ar-

rives to find the news still withheld. There is no time to lose; the party is only a few steps away; one is made to feel the diminishing distance between life and death, between happiness and woe. Pity has no power to stay woe. The old man before he goes, sees finally the happy family his news will serve to crush. "I am nearly eighty-three years old," he cries, "and this is the first time the sight of life has struck me." Then he departs, and through the windows those left behind see in pantomime the whole progress of the realizing sorrow.

Maeterlinck gains effect in the same way that he made us feel the *Intruder:* there is a restless observation which is poignant in its lingering on detail, and against the ruthless approach of sorrow and terror he places the innocence of the grandchildren of the old man, and the quiet domesticity of the home. Here he has a keen exemplification of quotidian

happenings in the midst of eternal verities.

"La Mort de Tintagiles" (1894)* is a typical picture of Maeterlinck's proneness to set the lyrical amidst black rivers of fright. It tells the story of a small boy, heir to a throne which a brutal woman covets. This woman is never seen, but her acts are dire and swift and unerring. She has cleared her path of all obstacles save this one tender stalk. At last she brings him to the dark and dank castle, which is all in shadow save the tower in which she dwells. The boy is protected by his sisters, *Ygraine* and *Bellangère,* but not so well guarded that he cannot be snatched from them while they sleep. He is followed by *Ygraine,* who at last reaches an iron door from behind which the boy calls to her in frenzied terror. But though

*Played by the London Stage Society, London, 1899-1900; by the Sezessionsbühne, Berlin, Nov. 12, 1900. See the *Athenæum,* 1: 794-95, June 24, 1899. Charles Martin Loeffler has set the piece to music (Schirmer).

she beat and tear the panels, and cry aloud for pity, she only hears the approach of doom for the small fellow, whose shrieks grow fainter and fainter, and finally fade into that silence which proclaims the futility of grief and the powerlessness of love to save the body. It is an effortless piece of cruelty, graded in masterly fashion.

The great flaw in Maeterlinck's theories regarding puppets is that he did not realize that however much his dramas might abhor an actor, and however much his technical demands might debar them from practical consideration at the theatre, the mind of the reader, through poetic and vivid suggestiveness, is able to supply just those stage accessories which Maeterlinck claims his plays could do without. But inasmuch as our audiences of the present have no willingness to exert intellectual effort at the theatre, they demand an external action which is not only legitimate

but characteristic of the theatre. Action is the distinguishing line between pictorial or plastic art, and drama. Character has to assert itself on the stage. That Maeterlinck created a peculiar atmosphere is not to be denied; that he made one feel the imminent presence of the unknown is likewise true. But whereas in Greek drama the submission to fate was majestic and the picturing of wild frenzy relentless, in Maeterlinck the puppet response of these marionette characters made them oftentimes puerile. There was truth in his theory of *static* drama, there was truth in his acknowledgment of the forces of life as protagonists, but his people were all spineless. The next step in his dramatic theory resulted in his use of that factor which was to turn his spectres into living flesh and blood. I mean his philosophical acceptance of will as above destiny, where human character is concerned.

CHAPTER VI

THE ETERNAL FEMININE AND MAETERLINCK'S LATER PLAYS

"With reverence must we draw near to them [women], be they lowly or arrogant, inattentive or lost in dreams, be they smiling still or plunged in tears; for they know the things that we do not know, and have a lamp that we have lost. Their abiding-place is at the foot itself of the Inevitable, whose well-worn paths are visible to them more clearly than to us. And thence it is that their strange intuitions have come to them, their gravity at which we wonder; and we feel that, even in their most trifling actions, they are conscious of being upheld by the strong, unerring hands of the gods. I said before that they drew us nearer to the gates of our beings; verily might we believe, when we are with them, that that primeval gate is opening, amidst the bewildering whisper that doubtless waited on the birth of things, then when speech was yet hushed, for fear lest command or forbidding should issue forth, unheard. . . ."—Maurice Maeterlinck.

Maurice Maeterlinck

I

MAETERLINCK'S attitude of mind is one of infinite courtesy; he is never self-assertive, he is never over-positive, he is always calm. He is keenly alive to the spiritual side of all things, and he converts progress into terms of invisible forces. He is a man of many interests, but he views these interests from the same angle, and gives them the same mystic and ideal texture. He begins probably with an historical, a sociological, a scientific fact, and he refines to such a degree that this fact takes on qualities never seen before. He is always searching in that infinite space where lies the secret which may stand revealed at any moment; he is always scaling that height to which the average person never attains, and he expects to be followed with no demur. The only requisites he demands are a clean heart, a clear mind, and an open soul. In this, Maeterlinck

may be likened to King Arthur—Tennyson's King Arthur whose counsel was always to "live pure, speak true, right wrongs."

Inasmuch as he possesses this courtesy, Maeterlinck is a man of deference; in every direction he takes that infinite pains to understand, which proclaims him intellectually modest. He is a man of enthusiasm, but here again he is tempered, not by an overburdening of intellectual questioning or doubt, but by a prophetic vision. He took from Shakespeare much of his romantic glow; he even took some of his situations and motives, but he transmuted them into spiritual essence. And in Shakespeare, when he analyzed "Macbeth" and "King Lear," he saw only those qualities which Charles Lamb considered far beyond the province of the stage.

Maeterlinck took from Emerson and a long line of mystics, but though Emerson was his greatest influence, he transmuted

the transcendentalism of the New England school into an even finer and more abstract and more universal philosophy—one that possessed no note of democracy in it, though open to all who had awakened souls. Maeterlinck acknowledged the individual, the scholar, the citizen of self-trust,—but he placed the inner life of man above the democratic expression of the individual; he believed, as in "Wisdom and Destiny," that "the inner life begins when the soul becomes good, and not when the intellect ripens." Therefore, he does more than proclaim that the soul is master, for he shows wherein the soul may develop to its fullest powers.

Maeterlinck is a man of deference toward women, and from the moment that he first saw Madame Maeterlinck (Georgette Leblanc), his star became certain and luminous, and he set out to measure the extent of love in well-rounded, full, vibrant, and rich tones. His marionettes

ceased being puppets, and took on the wholesome quality of living persons. Thus far, Madame Maeterlinck has been his greatest influence—undoubtedly for good, and now and again for bad. An actress of some pronounced reputation, she herself has had speculative ideas regarding art, carrying the dramatic interpretation of song and dance to great perfection. She has advanced even further, giving those performances at Saint-Wandrille to illustrate how much is lost in not being able to bring acting up to the same largeness and freedom as life by offering to the actor the freedom of space beyond the limits of a stage. But somehow her enthusiasm blinded her to the fact that one of the differences between the theatre and life is that in the theatre people are brought together on purpose to see the unfolding of events, and that just so soon as drama is carried beyond the proscenium arch, the audience has to travel with it.

As an experiment that is interesting; yet it is not practicable as far as the theatre is concerned. It represents an artistic whim furthered by the mediæval atmosphere of the Norman Abbey itself. Madame Maeterlinck is responsible for Saint-Wandrille;* it was she who expressed a desire for such a home, when she first saw the place, amidst its thirty-five acres of dense woods and moist, cool grounds. They were automobiling at the time, mayhap from their former country place in the hamlet of Grûchet-St.-Simon, near Dieppe. Living in the heart of such an ancient pile, with its eleventh century chapel, its crypts of the thirteenth century, its twelfth century refectory, and its fourteenth century cloister, it was small wonder that Madame Maeterlinck saw enacted therein the entire

*See Harry's description of Saint-Wandrille in *Petit Bleu* (Brussels), Sept. 28, 29, 1907; March 22, 23, 24, 1908. Also Espérance-Hyacinthe Langlois's "L'Abbaye de Fontenelle ou de Saint-Wandrille" (Paris, 1827).

melodrama of "Macbeth," it was natural that she saw *Mélisande* wandering through the shadowed halls. Such a place invited largeness of imagination, but as far as inviting the maintenance of an extensive household, the Abbey of Saint-Wandrille reckoned without its host. For, to repeat, though in former times it had sheltered four hundred Benedictines, it now holds every season only Maeterlinck and his wife, with a secretary and three servants.

Here Maeterlinck has everything to please his love of solitude; he has his study, with windows overlooking far stretches of woods, he has his stream for fishing, he has everything but his bees. For the hive demands attention, and inasmuch as he does not live at Saint-Wandrille in winter time, he has abandoned that interest at the Abbey.

It is said that Madame Maeterlinck is profound in her knowledge of psychology and occultism; that she practices crystal-

gazing. These studies are in direct accord with the tastes of her husband, and the bond between the two has strengthened year by year. The consequence is that in the development of the feminism of Maeterlinck, his wife has been his greatest interpreter—first, in the way of analysis, and second in the matter of acting. No biographer can dispense with the keen insight of Georgette Leblanc,* who has dissected so unerringly "The Later Heroines of Maurice Maeterlinck," and who has so charmingly described the manner in which Maeterlinck accomplished his translation of "Macbeth." There is an emotionalism in her writing which proclaims the artistic sensitiveness of the woman. But wherever Madame Maeterlinck's activity finds expression in print, one is enabled to see how far she has been influenced by Maeterlinck himself—how far she has in turn

*See "In Madame Bovary's Country," by Georgette Leblanc Maeterlinck, *Fortn.*, 91: 862-75.

influenced him. For, beginning with "Aglavaine et Sélysette," the author of *Maleine* and *Mélisande* took on new power.

And this new power came through the deepening reverence for women, as typified in Madame Maeterlinck. Is there any direct reference in his essays to his wife? I think it is very evident that she is the original for the "Portrait of a Lady" in "The Double Garden." Maeterlinck, the philosopher, becomes blended with Maeterlinck, the lover, who realizes that it is not enough for husband and wife to be virile friends, equal comrades, and deepest companions of life. The forces of existence so act upon a woman's soul as to keep her always the perfect flower, even when she is struggling, and "with all her strength resisting an unjust feeling."

Pure idealism surrounds her as it surrounds all things in life. Still there is a rift in the calmness of perfection, and it is in that rift there lies the new humanity

of Maurice Maeterlinck. He writes: "She has, therefore, by way of an adornment, all the passions and all the weaknesses of womankind; and, thanks to the gods, she does not present that still-born perfection which possesses all the virtues without being vivified by a single fault." Then follows the generalization in Maeterlinck which would change all evil into good by the power which tends to uplift, as the natural inclination of the soul. He says: "A virtue is but a vice that raises instead of lowering itself."

Therefore, in this rift he places all the human expressions that result in woman's outward beauty, in her "innocent vanities"; these are innocent only in so far as they do the soul no harm. Maeterlinck's idea of woman is perhaps more quiescent than these modern times care for. Her chastity, in his eyes, is largely due to her negative qualities, to her inertness; for does he not say that she is "a tissue of vices quies-

cent?" If she is "just because she does not act," then her morality is one of sleep, and between Maeterlinck's ideal and "Monna Vanna" there is a wide stream, for *Vanna* does act, and attains the highest moral position. In this "Portrait of a Lady" we have his doubt again expressed as to which is preferable, the "active or the passive life." For in his search after the depths of truth, he has found, to his own understanding, that women are nearer to God than men, and that "they lead us close to the gates of our being." This they do, "above the earth-level of our intellect"—by means of that divine instinct which we claim that they alone possess.

Maeterlinck's conception of the feminine is full of chivalry; in it there is the modern note, but social and economic demands are transmuted into life forces which rivet the attention upon the character of this change befalling women, and upon the moral significance of their posi-

tion. "Woman has so long lived kneeling in the shadow that our prejudiced eyes find it difficult to seize the harmony of the first movements which she risks when rising to her feet in the light of day." This prepares us for his opinion of women in "The Arabian Nights,"* an idea which occurred to him while reading a translation by Dr. Mardrus. After noting their slavery, which consisted of wisdom and beauty being bartered for the merest trifle; after noting how kings, wise and just, tired of their loves and threw them off with no concern whatsoever; after realizing that these women, so lofty in their concepts of justice and of morality, bowed without protest to their fate, Maeterlinck then challenges the present which marvels at such social degradation. "We who also reflect on justice and virtue, on pity and love—are we so sure that they who come after us shall not some day find, in our present so-

**Independent,* Jan. 3, 1901.

cial condition, a spectacle equally disconcerting and amazing?"

Put into poetry, Maeterlinck's conception of women would correspond to Matthew Arnold's concept in "The Future:"

> "What girl
> Now reads in her bosom as clear
> As Rebekah read, when she sate
> At eve by the palm-shaded well?
> Who guards in her breast
> As deep, as pellucid a spring
> Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?"

For in his claim* that woman's certitude lies wholly in the first look of love, is found Maeterlinck's highest pinnacle of reverence and worship. Women struggle to fling from them any disillusionment of that first glance, and we are nearer truth than we realize when we reach that point where we can accept with a full heart Maeterlinck's mandate: "You are more truly that which you are in her eyes than that which in your soul you believe yourself to be."

*See "On Women" in "The Treasure of the Humble."

Maeterlinck's interest in women, therefore, is from an angle totally different from that of Ibsen; it is all instinct and the exercise of certain mystic powers that characterize them. And if he deals with them under the impetus of passion, he transmutes that passion into a chastity which is pure and strong. His knowledge of sex takes on a nobleness, a poetic ecstasy which Ibsen failed to realize. Yet Ibsen's feminism is more impelling.

Maeterlinck's feminism undoubtedly comes from his conviction that "women are indeed the veiled sisters of all the great things we do not see"; the sources of their being are to him as pure as ever the soul can hope to be. Women are the preservers of the real fragrance of the soul, they are the true disciples of the mystic sense.

Madame Maeterlinck is more full-blooded than this ideal reverence would indicate; she is the physical type that age will not easily destroy. Her stimulation

has carried Maeterlinck through the shadow into light; so much so as to enable him to write of *Aglavaine*: "She brought to me a new atmosphere, a will to happiness, a power of hope. If she does not at once triumph over the fatality which still weighs upon little *Sélysette,* at least she sheds light on it, and henceforth her light will direct my researches in a serene and happy and consoling course."

In other words, Maeterlinck was waked up; he began to see the futility of allowing disaster to fade out character; he made disaster one of the reasons for the development of character, giving his *dramatis personæ* for the first time the inclination to oppose heredity, to exert will, and to direct destiny. Madame Maeterlinck separates the heroines of these plays into three groups—first, the unconscious princesses, whose characters never develop beneath the fatalistic powers of life, but display every form of submission; second, those

who for the first time become conscious of will, yet are weak in the use of it; and third, those who exert will to modify events, thus bringing disaster.

Madame Maeterlinck writes: "The intellects [in this third period] fight against 'the human errors and wishes,' as we shall now name what before we called 'the fatal powers,' and this change is brought about by the very intellects which we propose to study. Behold reason intervening." The value of a woman's analysis of these tapestry women lies in the personal relations existing between Maeterlinck and his wife. She may have arrived at conclusions somewhat similar had she not had him to analyse the motives with her. But, we may regard her writing on the subject as partly reflecting her husband's own attitude and his own method of analysis. What her contribution to the new period was to be in the way of influence of Maeterlinck may well be measured by her declaration that

now these people of his plays "have a personal character, a personal morality, a will. . . . It matters little to us, when we consider them, that the example of *Aglavaine* was disastrous, that of *Monna Vanna* admirable, that of *Ardiane* useless. What concerns us is the action which they performed and the will whence it sprang." Therefore, in "Aglavaine et Sélysette" we reach the parting of the ways; the latter belongs to the pale type of the marionette plays, but she is willing, for love, to sacrifice herself. In the case of *Aglavaine,* the will struggles with the flesh in order to do the right thing. Hence, this heroine becomes the incentive for *Ardiane* and *Joyzelle.* Maeterlinck in fact is now completely won over to the philosophy of happiness—a philosophy maintained largely by the will to love. "Joyzelle" proves this; so does "The Blue Bird."

This analysis of Madame Maeterlinck is quite remarkable; it contains a little

strain of relief that her husband has reached the point where mystic atmosphere alone is incapable of raising his women above ordinary life. She detects his desire to have such a character as *Monna Vanna* prepared in intelligence and in moral fibre to meet the event she has to face. And so to this woman of full-blooded interest, Maeterlinck's new feminine types, found in *Aglavaine, Joyzelle, Monna Vanna,* and *Ardiane,* speak, as she writes, in this manner:

"We are not gentler, nor better, nor more loving than our sisters in the past; but our goodness is subject to different laws. Our love is no less tender, but it is built on more durable foundations. We are not greater, but less accessible; not haughtier, but less shy. We know how to break the bonds which chance fastens round our cradles; we no longer consent to accept the weight of the fatalities wherewith men are

pleased to burden us. . . . Our virtue . . . lies wholly in the thanklessness of our task; for we are rarely loved. . . . To hasten our work, would that men might understand us a little better, fear us a little less. Let them learn at last that since centuries and throughout the ages, there has been but one divine woman, lover, mother, and sister! If, at the present moment, we appear different or rebellious, it is only so that we may one day offer them stronger companions and nearer to perfection!" Yet "Ardiane et Barbe-Bleue" was used as a suffragette plea in England not long ago!

II

Of "Aglavaine et Sélysette,* J. W.

*"Aglavaine et Sélysette" was first published in 1896 (Paris: Société du Mercure de France); the translation into English by Alfred Sutro (Richards) contains an introduction by J. W. Mackail; reviewed in *Westminster Rev.*, April, 1899, 151: 409-16; *Fortn.*, Aug., 1897, 68: 185-86 (V. M. Crawford); and *Liv. Age*, 235: 193. In 1901, 1902, the Théâtre de Maurice Maeterlinck was issued in three volumes (Brussels, P. Lacomblez); reviewed in the *Athenæum*, 1902, 1: 554-55.

Mackail says that there are really only two actors in the little drama, even though the directions call for five. It is a duologue, during which the souls of two types of women develop. They have been foreshadowed in "Alladine et Palomides." *Meligrane,* the grandame, is only a means toward an end—the end of wonderment and suspense; little *Yssaline, Sélysette's* sister, is a continuation of the innocence of *Yniold,* and is simply an accompaniment, to serve as contrast with the awakening of *Sélysette; Meleander* is the romantic youth, against whom these women struggle for the full realization of their love. And even though the play meets with disastrous conclusions, this is the first of Maeterlinck's where there is an agreeableness of association; it is likewise the first that has a thesis strong enough to admit of philosophical argument—an argument which detracts from the dramatic action of the whole. Where, in the marionette

pieces, we now and again obtain stray bits of belief, here we have long passages revealing an inner beauty and an inner quality of soul, responsive to influence and growth as the body is responsive.

Meleander and *Sélysette* are one at the moment when *Aglavaine* is to arrive—*Aglavaine,* a sister to *Sélysette* by law. She is now a widow, one who having tasted deep of the waters of unhappiness, is best able to give forth love. At the very outset we see the tragedy in store for *Sélysette,* we even sense the motive of the tower. It is likewise made evident that *Aglavaine's* beauty is manifold, that it engenders truth, and that by the side of it *Sélysette's* beauty is more of the spirit, more mystic, more intangible. This contrast makes *Meleander* hope that *Aglavaine's* arrival will incite their love to better understanding.

But life under such conditions is wonderfully human, and before ever *Agla-*

vaine arrives, *Sélysette's* eyes are opened and the woman peeps forth. Then the other comes, and the forces of destiny begin their work. It is useless to explain minutely the situation in this drama, or even the symbolism, for as *Aglavaine* says of *Sélysette's* key, opening the door to the tower, "A key is the most beautiful of all things, so long as we do not know what it unlocks." But simple as the first act is, we feel the subtle presence of dangerous relationships. Again *Aglavaine* declares: "We have uttered the little timid words that strangers speak when they meet; and yet, who can tell all that has taken place between the three of us?"

Between *Meleander* and *Aglavaine,* there springs up the dangerous stream that harbors fear—the fear of what may happen. Yet the theory of love, as *Aglavaine* argues it, is over again the theory of platonic friendship; the three in this tragic triangle might strive "towards the love

that disdains the pettiness of love," and yet be swept beyond knowing. They must struggle, these two, yet they bend beneath the weight and declare their love for each other. Thus they are discovered by *Sélysette.*

No wonder the maid smarts beneath the pity, the tender attitude of these two toward her; it is quite natural the temptation *Sélysette* has to push *Aglavaine* into a well, by the side of which she is found asleep. Yet forbearance is the act that seals the link between these women—the strong and the weak or inexperienced—both of them uncertain what best is to be done. The time for exercise of wisdom is always one of greatest need.

The rest of the play is an analysis of a tremendous love motive from two points of view, and in accord with the natures of two types of women. One has deep knowledge, the other tender ignorance, and between these extremes the play fluctuates—

from jealousy to confidence, from distrust to trust. Poor little *Sélysette* awakens, but her soul experiences dire pain in the growth. And as *Meligrane* says, there are only two solutions for sorrow of this kind; "either must one of you die or the other go away." *Aglavaine* overhears this and by the end of the second act duty stares both women in the face.

The analyses of love are not easy to follow in the drama sense; we only know that *Aglavaine* is more capable of coping with the human problem, that *Sélysette* is a tender flower exerting every effort to understand. We here get a glimpse of Maeterlinck's marionette heroines made conscious of duty, and we reach the conclusions that, after all, *Maleine* and *Mélisande* and *Alladine* are only average feminine humanity—perhaps not as practical as average humanity, but just as blind when it comes to coping with the higher forces of life. *Aglavaine's* realization of

Sélysette's struggle compels her to the conclusion which she thus states to *Meleander*: "Were I to linger by your side and cause others to suffer, I should no longer be what you are, nor would you be what I am, and our love would no longer be the same as our love of to-day." This ideal attitude finds itself again expressed in the essays.

It is dangerous fire that *Aglavaine* plays with, a fire that no philosophical conclusions can quench. She decides to leave; *Meleander* himself agrees that it is best for all three. But it is too late; the little soul that feels itself pushed out is whirled toward self-immolation. The tower is the means of solution—the tower around which strange birds hover. Death waits for *Sélysette* in that tower where there are loose stones along the edge. The whole progress of this tragedy is poignantly described—a lyrical strain of suffering, and when *Sélysette* and *Yssaline* talk with the

grandame, *Meligrane,* we are reminded of a scene to come in "The Blue Bird."

The love motive is slightly confused, and therein its mystic quality may be maintained. "We bring sorrow to all those we love," says *Sélysette;* yet, on the other hand, *Aglavaine* believes that "those who love must live; and the more we love, the more must we wish to live." How this little figure, battling so hard to know, to understand, is tossed to and fro, with dire questionings, awakenings too boundless for a child to compass! In such an atmosphere, it were natural that *Sélysette* should die, sacrificing one type of love for the conquest of another.

The play is rather indefinite in its close, though it is evident why *Sélysette* covers up her sacrifice, crushed by her fall from the tower. There is tremendous pathos in the overwhelming love of different kinds that Maeterlinck discusses. There is a spiritual beauty that is earthly, and an

earthly beauty that is spiritual, and the *doctrinaire* quality of the story spoiled it for me as it spoiled it for James Huneker, who further believes, quite rightly, that "*Aglavaine* is the mouthpiece for Maeterlinck in his 'Treasure of the Humble.'" The text shows that Maeterlinck has turned essayist.

The general opinion among critics seems to be that "Aglavaine et Sélysette" is not as pure a piece of work as "Pélléas et Mélisande," but I think it excels the latter just by measure of its philosophical conviction. Its solution is difficult to hold to, simply because the fine distinctions of motives are so subtle. Happiness brings pain, or requires pain in its accomplishment; it is a law of life that we never gain without giving; even by our love sometimes we kill, as the friendship of *Aglavaine* eventually kills *Sélysette*. Ibsen's *Brand* asked all or nothing, and absolute spiritual consciousness means pain, even annihilation.

It is Emerson's law of compensation that Maeterlinck suggests in "Aglavaine et Sélysette."* This ideal love-talk may be way beyond the accomplishment of mortal, but by it neither *Aglavaine* nor *Meleander* is blinded, and *Sélysette* to the very end is never once deceived. This is a play of high motives theoretically placed.†

Maeterlinck realized the change taking place in him; he knew that there was a new force governing his characters. It was his growth in philosophical attitude that made him supplant death upon the throne by the glorification of love. The preface to his "Théâtre" is distinctive because of the attempt to reconcile the unknown with the

*For further analysis, see Georges Leneveu, "Ibsen et Maeterlinck."

†In 1901, the first and third volumes of Maeterlinck's "Théâtre" were published, the second appearing in 1902. It is well to remember that before this, the following essays appeared: "Trésor des Humbles" (1896), "La Temple Enseveli" (1896), and "La Sagesse et la Destinée" (1898). These volumes intervening between the plays will account for the philosophical attitude now assumed by the dramatist.

real condition of drama. So he wrote: "The dramatic poet is no longer able to restrict himself to generalities. He is obliged to come in touch with real life, with the life of every day, with the idea of the unknown to which he is accustomed. He must show us in what fashion, under what form, in what conditions, after what laws, to what end all the superior powers, all the unintelligible influences, the infinite principles, of which he is persuaded the universe is full, act upon our destinies." So that Maeterlinck, among other poets, finds himself constrained to renounce the use of sentiments that are not "human in their material and psychological effects." We therefore realize that he is seeking for a third empire, such as is so eloquently outlined in Ibsen's "Emperor and Galilean." The old beauty was no longer beautiful.

Maeterlinck's next plays are not plays in intention or in execution; in fact he would oppose any effort on the part of a

critic to find in them any great thought, either moral or philosophical. "Properly speaking," he writes, "they are small 'jeux de scène,' short poems of a kind unfortunately called 'opera-comique,' destined to furnish to the musicians who might wish it, a theme suitable to lyrical developments."

But, despite Maeterlinck's simple intention, "Ardiane et Barbe-Bleue"* has been subject to extensive discussion. First, the translator experienced difficulty in converting "Sister Beatrice" and "Ardiane" from French verse into English equivalents. The consequence is that in neither piece do we obtain any of the beauty of the original, though the effect is far above the average

*"Ardiane et Barbe-Bleue" was published in 1901, and was set to music by Paul Dukas. It was first sung and acted at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on May 10, 1907, with Georgette Leblanc as *Ardiane*; and at the New York Metropolitan Opera House on March 29, 1911, with Geraldine Farrar in the leading rôle. See "Bluebeard and Aryan," S. C. de Soissons, *Fortn.* 74: 994-97; also *Liv. Age*, 228: 130-33. As to the difficulties of versification, see the Translator's Preface.

opera libretto. Despite Maeterlinck's strictures, however, we believe that *Ardiane* carries his feminism a step further, and introduces a satirical element which is not a common characteristic in any of his other writings.

There is much in "Ardiane et Barbe-Bleue" also to connect it with the philosophical preachment of Ibsen in "The Lady from the Sea," and to prepare the way for "L'Oiseau Bleu." Undoubtedly, Maeterlinck reverted to Charles Perrault's fairy tale for the general outline of his story—the story of a man whose existence in French history was as real, if not as prominent, as the figure of Henry VIII. *Ardiane* stands out from the mass of women as a being who demands something more than the slavery with which *Bluebeard's* other wives are satisfied. While she is not the new woman, at least she is a woman new to Maeterlinck.

She arrives at *Bluebeard's* castle, amidst

the warnings of a rabble outside; she knows all that they might says of his cruelty; she is fully aware of the threatening death facing her. The belief is that the five wives before her have been murdered; in reality they are immured in a subterranean hall, each one in turn having followed her curiosity. For each had been given seven keys—again, the mystic seven —six of silver and one of gold. The latter is the only key whose use is forbidden them.

To *Ardiane,* this seventh key alone has interest; the others she flings from her. But the *Nurse* who comes with her begins exploring with the six silver keys; one by one, they unlock doors behind which untold beauties of amethysts, sapphires, pearls, emeralds, rubies, and diamonds are disclosed. Amidst incessant sound of living jewels, *Ardiane* bedecks herself, for through her beauty she believes to learn his secret—the secret of *Barbe-Bleue.*

There is an element of the miraculous in all this miracle of beauty, foreshadowing the marvels to befall *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl* in "L'Oiseau Bleu," with the fairy *Béry-lune.* No fear prompts *Ardiane;* though death await her behind the door of the golden key—a door she discovers within the diamond bowered recess,—nothing deters her. The secret panels divide, only to disclose darkness, but far off she detects the muffled sound of singing. Once opened, the door refuses to be closed, and the distant voices chant of maids in dire plight, seeking for day and freedom. Then *Barbe-Bleue* comes upon *Ardiane,* who defies him and boasts that it is never her will to live in darkness. He steps near to seize her, but the *Nurse* spreads alarm, and in all confusion the rabble forces the door, and rushes in. *Barbe-Bleue* stands by, while *Ardiane,* in quiet reserve, disperses the crowd, closing the door upon herself

and the vanquished being. Such are the perverseness and vagary of women!

It is in the second act that *Ardiane* and the *Nurse,* locked in the subterranean hall, meet with the other wives, captive and in rags, an inert and huddled mass. Here they are, with all their physical beauty unused. Why cannot they, like *Ardiane,* face the future with determination to win freedom by themselves? Beneath a lighted lamp *Ardiane* sees all that might be were there a will. Now, the five wives bear the names of Maeterlinck's former heroines; they are *Sélysette, Ygraine, Mélisande, Bellangère,* and *Alladine.* Maybe this similarity of outward form suggests a contrast in Maeterlinck's growing technique—the contrast of *Sélysette* with *Ardiane.* But if this was not the poet's intention, at least Dukas's score ignores the fact, for in the passages relating to *Mélisande,* he has introduced an orchestration reminiscent of Claude Debussy.

Here stands *Ardiane,* come to set them free—these women who "never sought escape." They have been held back by false report; they have never had the initiative to explore. Rather than face the unknown, they would live in terror, even as those trained to certain belief would never miss their mental freedom taken from them. To *Ardiane,* this seems well-nigh incomprehensible. She seeks for means of escape, holding a small flame in her hand, and when a drop of water extinguishes the lamp, she still seeks, for there is a gray glimmer before her—from whence it comes the others do not know, so *Ardiane* herself determines to discover.

She climbs slowly upon a mass of rock, and spies bolts and bars which the others have never sought to push aside; they have heard, without proving, that the sea lies behind those doors. But *Ardiane* believes only in the light; these others are mostly in love with their darkness. So their de-

liverer draws the bolts, disclosing a glass which she next breaks, letting in a radiance of untold brightness. The scene is one of struggle on the part of *Ardiane* to keep from falling into the darkness of the other women. And so they all escape this vaulted gloom, following *Ardiane* as *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl* followed *Bérylune*. They had found the door at last, but only *Ardiane* had had the will to lead!

Thus far, *Barbe-Bleue* has had little to do with the main plot of the story; in fact his *rôle* is not as important as his unseen influence which permeates the drama. When the third act opens, he is away from his castle on some mission, while in the hall the five wives are decking themselves with feminine beauty, under the guidance of *Ardiane*. She is of the woman womanly, believing to conquer by her physical charms. In the midst of these preparations, *Bluebeard* arrives, surrounded by his negro slaves. But at his door he is at-

tacked by the peasants with terrible onslaught, and, strange to say, the wives who see this combat deplore his danger and bemoan his wounds!

Once more the crowd breaks in, carrying *Barbe-Bleue* pinioned in their midst. They believe they have rendered service to the women. But they are wrong. *Ardiane* manœuvres to drive them away, and they leave, this motley crew, variously hurt by the monster lying prone upon the floor. The five wives immediately attend him, turning upon the people outside, whose only motive was to save them; they care for him as though he were their kindest friend. The cords that bind him are cut from him, and once more he is unhindered to do his deadly deeds. And then *Ardiane* fares forth alone, none of the other women having the will or the inclination to follow.

The irony in this conclusion is the irony

of "The Lady from the Sea."* It seems as though Maeterlinck were standing in self-judgment upon his early heroines, even as Ibsen turned in reaction against himself in "The Wild Duck." Says Archibald Henderson, "it is obvious that Maeterlinck is envisaging here the present and coming revolt of woman against her subjection." There is no doubt that self-reliance is better than fear, that intelligence is better than ignorance. It is feminine slavery that has allowed a Bluebeard to exist. As the curtain descends on this satirical incident, we note that *Barbe-Bleue* stands abashed. Once *Ardiane* has passed from his presence, he no doubt returns to his mastery and to his brutality. By her passing he is not revolutionized, as *Helmer* was reborn when *Nora* left his Doll's House. No wonder "Ardiane et Barbe-Bleue" bears as its sub-title, "The Useless Deliverance"!

*See my "Henrik Ibsen: The Man and his Plays," Chapter XVIII.

As far as "Sister Beatrice"* is concerned, it is a miracle play with some of the quality of a morality. What is more, for the first time, Maeterlinck makes use of a story familiarized to English readers by Adelaide Proctor in "A Legend of Provence" and by John Davidson in "A Ballad of a Nun." But what seems to me most curious is that no critic has pointed out the similarity existing between this version and the old miracle of Nôtre Dame.

It is the story of the *Nun* who goes out into the world, drawn thither by a young *Knight,* who soon tires of her and forsakes

*"Sister Beatrice" was first published in 1901. See reviews in *Athenæum*, May 3, 1902, 1:554-55; *Critic,* September, 1902, 41:275. On March 14, 1910, it was given a performance by the New Theatre Company, headed by Edith Wynne Matthison and Pedro de Cordoba. In the late Spring of 1911 (June), Madame Bernhardt gave one special matinée. Bernard Miall calls attention to a Dutch version of the story translated in an English publication, *The Pageant,* by Laurence Housman and J. Simons. See W. P. Eaton's "At the New Theatre and Others."

her. While away, the *Nun's* place is taken by the Holy Virgin, between whom and *Sister Beatrice* there is great likeness. But after years, the *Nun* is disillusioned. She reaches the convent in time to die, finding that all the while her holy offices have been fulfilled in miraculous fashion by the Virgin.

The play is simple in its design, and mediæval in its setting. There are Burne-Jones effects when *Bellidore* arrives to carry *Beatrice* away, for as the scene was mounted at the New Theatre, beyond the open door of the austere convent might be seen the starry night and the moonlit country. The opera libretto is spiritualized, and contains the Maeterlinck touches which endow *Sister Eglantine* with some of the delicacy of *Alladine* and of *Sélysette,* and which relates *Little Allette* to *Little Yniold.* When the poor child comes to the convent in advance of those beggars who daily clamor their wants to the Sisters

—when she comes as bearer of the news that *Sister Beatrice* has broken her vow, only to find what seems to her to be the living *Beatrice,* though it really be the Virgin, the child's questioning again suggests that Maeterlinck has been a close reader of Perrault. For the latter, of all writers of the *contes de fées,* succeeded in retaining the simplicity of childhood in his style, and Maeterlinck's simplicity is essentially delicate, and almost naïve. This naïveté he himself recognized and challenged when he came to consider "La Princesse Maleine" in his preface to the "Théâtre."

It is the spiritual value of "Sister Beatrice" which makes it so beautiful—a value which, save in one moment of effect, seemed to desert Maeterlinck completely in "Mary Magdalene." This quality is almost lost in the translation, and in the acting it depends entirely upon the radiance and richness of feeling put into it. The moral of the piece is almost too evident on

the surface, but there is a difference between external morality and spiritual luminosity.* In order to maintain the action, the dialogue has to be cut; otherwise, when *Sister Beatrice* returns to the convent and shows the extent of her repentance, there is an overweight of moral quality that retards the interest as drama.

In the development of Maurice Maeterlinck, however, "Sister Beatrice" does not hold significant place for the reason that it does not add to his "feminism" in the least. Yet it does make more definite the moral situation externalized for dramatic effect. And it is this very definiteness of moral statement that makes "Monna Vanna" his most effective work for the theatre.

*This distinction is seen in the methods of acting distinguishing Edith Wynne Matthison from Olga Nethersole, who played *Sister Beatrice* on the road during the season of 1910-11. The rôle is totally unsuited to any actress whose physical quality dominates the spiritual. Miss Matthison's interpretation was altogether one of genuine spirituality, aided by a moral enthusiasm so characteristic of all her work.

CHAPTER VII

MAETERLINCK'S MORAL THEATRE

"Here is a play in which almost every character is noble, in which treachery becomes a virtue, a lie becomes more vital than truth, and only what we are accustomed to call virtue shows itself mean, petty, and even criminal. . . . Character, in the deepest sense, makes the action, and there is something in the movement of the play which resembles the grave and reasonable march of a play of Sophocles, in which men and women deliberate wisely and not only passionately, in which it is not only the cry of the heart and of the senses which takes the form of drama. . . . The playwright has gained experience, the thinker has gained wisdom, but the curious artist has lost some of his magic."
—Arthur Symons on "Monna Vanna."

THERE is a definite moral problem in "Monna Vanna."* Because of this,

*"Monna Vanna" was published in 1902, and was translated into English by Alfred Sutro (Dodd), and by A. I. DuP. Coleman (Harper). It was first produced at the Nouveau Théâtre, Paris, on May 17, 1902,

it is the first of Maeterlinck's plays—and the only one thus far—lacking in mystic atmosphere. It is said that he read Sis-

with Lugné-Poë as *Marco Colonna,* and with Madame Georgette Leblanc Maeterlinck as *Vanna* [Théâtre de l'Œuvre]. In Munich, it was given its première at the Königliches Schauspielhaus, on September 27, 1902. The first New York production occurred at the Irving Place Theatre on Dec. 17, 1903; while Madame Bertha Kalish, under the management of Harrison Grey Fiske, assumed the rôle, New York Manhattan Theatre, Oct. 23, 1905. See Février's score. Also *Dial,* Oct. 16, 1903, 35:257-58 (E. E. Hale, Jr.); *Nation,* Oct. 15, 1903, 77:307; *Athenæum,* June 28, 1902, 1:827; "Reader of Plays to the Rescue" [Censor of "Monna Vanna"], *19th Century,* 52:72-75 (W. F. Lord), 52:282-87 (H. H. Fyfe), 52:289 (W. F. Lord); *Fortn.,* Aug., 1902, 78:153-56 (L. A. Tadema); *Liv. Age,* 234:378; "My Idea of 'Monna Vanna,'" *Harp. Wk.,* Nov. 11, 1905, 49:1640 (Bertha Kalish); *Bookman,* Sept., 1902, 16:46-49 (F. T. Cooper); "Monna Vanna," Arthur Symons, in "Plays, Acting, and Music" (p. 137); also in same volume, Symons' examination of "A Question in Censorship" (p. 143). The play was published in *Revue de Paris,* 1902, 3:233-80, and was translated by Charlotte Porter in *Poet-Lore,* 15:1-52, 1904. See Eugen Zabel's "Maurice Maeterlinck und 'Monna Vanna,'" in "Zur modernen dramaturgie," 1903, 3:128-142; also "Modern Dramatists," pp. 242-54, by Ashley Dukes (London: Palmer). Concerning Maeterlinck and Browning, see *Independent,* 55:552-54; 1398-1400 (W. L. Phelps); *Academy,* 64:594 (W. L. Phelps); *Poet-Lore,* Oct.-Dec., 1903. In Maeterlinck's letter he speaks of his next play as "Jocquelle." There is no indication as to whether he intended to use this name instead of "Joyzelle."

mondi for months before writing "Monna Vanna." Such close application to historical detail finds itself reflected in speech after speech; in this respect it shows the weakness of D'Annunzio's "Francesca da Rimini." We have here a plot that raises the legend of Lady Godiva to the sphere of a personal morality thoroughly modern in its point of view, a morality sounded for example in Shaw's "Candida," when the heroine, discussing *Eugene's* future with her husband, *Morrell,* says:

"Ah, James, how little you understand me, to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restrain me. Put your trust in my love for you, James, for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons."

It were well to consider also that Maeterlinck makes bold to acknowledge his

indebtedness to Browning's "Luria," as he was to Shakespeare's "The Tempest" in the case of "Joyzelle." Maeterlinck wrote to Prof. Phelps of Yale, from 67 rue Raynouard, Paris, his note dated March 22, 1903:

"Vous avez parfaitement raison: il y a entre une scène épisodique de mon 2me acte (celle où Prinzivalle démasque Trivulzio) et l'une des grandes scènes de 'Luria' une similitude que je m'étonne de n'avoir pas vue signaler plus tôt. Je m'en étonne d'autant plus que, loin de cacher cette similitude, j'avais tenu à l'affirmer moi-même en prenant exactement les mêmes villes ennemies, la même époque et presque les mêmes personnages: alors qu'il, eût été bien facile de transposer le tout et de rendre l'emprunt méconnaissable, si j' avais eu l'intention de le dissimuler."

Being a deep reader of Browning, it is Maeterlinck's belief that one might naturally be *inspired* by the reading of "Luria";

thus would he relieve himself quite naturally of the accusation that he had borrowed from the English poet. He grants that into "Monna Vanna" he infused some of the atmosphere of "Luria," and he regards Browning as his master. Thus far he would pay tribute.

This drama, nevertheless, whatever the disputes, is Maeterlinck's theatrical pinnacle; it is effective in a direct way, and the problems are thoroughly human. Not only that, but the characters are very definately portrayed, each one having in his power to make the situation other than it actually is. Some critics claim that in view of *Prinzivalle's* excellence as a man, he would not have exacted such a test upon *Vanna,* but the Florence of that day engendered many feelings in the hero, especially that hero despised by his enemies and plotted against by his own people.

The story is one dealing with the Italian republics and their internecine warfare.

At the rise of the curtain, the Florentine forces under *Prinzivalle* have laid siege to Pisa with disastrous and successful effect, and *Guido,* the husband of *Vanna* and General of the Pisan forces, has sent his aged father as hostage to sue for peace. When *Marco* returns, he brings the assuring news that provisions, ammunition, and *Prinzivalle's* own support will be given Pisa upon one condition. This condition is the moral problem of the play as well as the problem of personal morality. It is the condition which, culminating in the second act, resulted in the play being censored from the English stage.*

*The Reader of Plays censored the second act of "Monna Vanna." See London *Times,* June 20, 1902, p. 7, col. 4. Those who protested were William Archer, John Oliver Hobbs, Richard Garnett, Thomas Hardy, Frederic Harrison, Lucas Malet, Maurice Hewlett, Henry Arthur Jones, George Meredith, Swinburne, Arthur Symons, Lawrence Alma Tadema, and W. B. Yeats. Fyfe argued against the play on the supposition that the theatre, appealing to the crowd, should not convey to the people original ideas before they have been submitted to the careful judgment of the individual. Ideas should only be used on the stage, so the argu-

The demand of *Prinzivalle,* the barbarian, the mercenary, is this: that in exchange for his assistance, *Monna Vanna* come to him clad only in her mantle. In Maeterlinck's hands, this situation becomes fraught with the direst significance, the most subtle moral nuances. *Marco,* the old man and hence the philosopher, takes this stipulation in its broadest civic sense and in recognition of *Vanna's* strongest characteristics. The whole problem is that of individual interpretation of purity. *Vanna* consents to go; a city's salvation shall not be weighed in the balance with one woman's personal safety! There is no test here as there is to be in "Joyzelle"; it is simply the measure of character which takes place.

Undoubtedly, *Prinzivalle* had lust in his demand, but when *Vanna* comes to him, he

ment went, after they have been in the air some time, and the people have become accustomed to them. None of these narrow-minded critics saw the moral and wholesome force of the situation.

is disarmed by the absolute beauty of her control. He had loved the woman before him since her girlhood, and now the richness of his love transforms the man. The situation becomes one wherein *Vanna*—stronger sister to *Aglavaine,* and somewhat of the stature of *Ardiane*—soars to excellent assertive heights; wherein *Prinzivalle* rises to the full realization of his love. Historical events so conduce that when he leaves with *Vanna* for Pisa, he is in no way stigmatized as deserter.

But *Guido,* meanwhile, has not become illumined; he represents in the play the stereotyped moral attitude; one might almost claim the average human attitude. It is when *Vanna* returns to him with the calm, exquisite assurance that she comes back to him as pure as when she left him—it is at this moment that *Guido* illustrates his incapacity to trust, to believe, to see. He doubts *Vanna* in every way, especially so when *Prinzivalle* stands before him.

Then, in his spiritually dead manner, he grasps at passing straws. Frenzy seizes him, and he makes himself believe that his wife has inveigled *Prinzivalle* to come with her, so that she may place him in the hands of the Pisans. Yet still *Vanna* persists that she returns untouched, and she beseeches *Guido*: "look at me as though you had never seen me before this hour, which is the first, the only one when you truly can love me as I wish to be loved."

But the truth to *Guido* is like the sea against an impregnable rock; there is only one impression he retains. Remove this, and his frenzy loosens its bounds. He shames her before the crowds at the doorway; he even pours wrath upon that very crowd for whose safety his wife has sold her honour; he finds outlet for this contumely upon the head of his father *Marco*. In fact, he doubts without one hope of trusting. And as a consequence he sends *Prinzivalle* to prison. Then *Vanna* buys

the prisoner with a lie—the lie that *Guido* believes as truth. Did he not throughout consider that *Vanna* had betrayed *Prinzivalle* into his hands? This is what she tells him now, and when the curtain falls, she has the key to her lover's dungeon.

For she does love *Prinzivalle*—never more so than in comparison with the weakness of *Guido,* who forfeits his love with the forfeit of his trust. *Marco,* the wise, understands her falsehood and its full significance; *Prinzivalle* knows that though she make believe it is her task to visit vengeance upon him in his dungeon, she will, in reality come to him with the true freedom and strength of her love. I should say that whereas, in "Joyzelle," Maeterlinck sends his heroine through varied tests of her love, here he succeeds in interpreting rather than in testing. And what does Georgette Leblanc write?

"*Monna Vanna,* to whom destiny propounds a problem so beautiful and so sim-

ple that no generous soul could have solved it otherwise than she did! I will not insist upon a woman's character so wonderfully called for by circumstances. Certainly, *Vanna* was ready; she had had happiness of living in the light of the good philosopher *Marco;* her intelligence was prepared; her training kept her above ordinary life. She was bound to be on the immediate level of the great event that questioned her and bound to reply to it without hesitation."

Furthermore, I agree with Lacour when he claims that the dialogue of "Monna Vanna," in its sobriety, in its incisive truth, reminds him of Ibsen's "Rosmersholm." It is a healthy attitude, and there is more of the civic spirit in it than in any other of Maeterlinck's dramas. But the play is not a masterpiece, though it stands individualized very largely because of the modern spirit of the characters. There is a lack of spiritual quality about *Vanna* that is re-

placed by the healthy red blood of the human situation.

Everyone commented upon Maeterlinck's departure from the mystic atmosphere; his creation of a moral problem through examination of dramatic action which was the outcome of different attitudes toward love, was interesting, but his dream quality was wanting. There is no doubt that because of the varied expressions of critical surprise, he was tempted to return to the spiritual. But his manner was to be different because his feminine interest was different. "Joyzelle"* represents the measure of his interest in "The Tempest" on one hand, and in the spiritual development of woman on the other.

*"Joyzelle" was published in 1903, and was presented at the Théâtre du Gymnase on May 20, 1903, with Georgette Leblanc in the title rôle. Besides the official translation by A. Teixeira de Mattos, a version was published in *Poet-Lore,* 1905, 16:1-45, done by Clarence Stratton. See *Fortn. Rev.,* July, 1903, 80:76-87 (M. A. Gerothwohl); *Critic,* August, 1903, 43:114:15 (Grace Corneau); *Lamp,* 27:581-86 (J. Huneker).

In "Joyzelle," as he himself has said, there is "the triumph of will and love over destiny or fatality, as against the converse lesson of 'Monna Vanna.' " It is a play that might become the text for a trial of love, in which the two young folk, *Joyzelle* and *Lancéor,* are within the power of *Merlin* and his genius, *Arielle—Arielle* representing the hidden force within each one of us. I was constantly reminded of the legend as it occurs in Tennyson's "Merlin and Vivien"—though the magic power is used to more advantage here.

Yet even the magic of "Joyzelle" is fraught with a more philosophic tone than the magic of the marionette dramas, and in consequence has faded before definite ideas. The story is simple of comprehension; it is Maeterlinck's concept of love that is more difficult to accept. In approaching Maeterlinck's philosophy, it is necessary to grasp fully the whole significance of his inward gaze, a gaze that aims

at self-revelation in its fullest sense. For he writes in "Wisdom and Destiny":

"When you love, it is not your love that forms part of your destiny; but the knowledge of self that you will have found, deep down in your love—this it is that will help to fashion your life."

It is this ideal quality to the characters in "Joyzelle" that makes them abstract vehicles for the fullest expressions of love. What they experience is simply Maeterlinck's test which he would give to all love in order to keep it strong and not built over caves of false illusions.

Merlin's son is *Lancéor* whose "fate is wholly inscribed within a circle of love." He approaches, and *Arielle* says to *Merlin* that if his son find not the all-powerful love before the month is past, then death will claim him. The point is to filter *Joyzelle's* love to see how much gold there is in it. Though the tests through which she is now carried are human, they are

administered with a precision that is wholly scientific. *Lancéor* and *Joyzelle* are somewhat children of the sea; the former has been a wanderer, the latter shipwrecked. It makes little difference who they are; the great fact is they love.

Merlin comes upon them, making *Lancéor* his prisoner, and separating him from *Joyzelle,* whom he bids keep away for fear of betrayal. From this point, *Joyzelle's* struggle begins. Kept apart, they refuse to abide by false dictates, and so they meet in a neglected garden, *Lancéor* risking all for his love. Their love pours over them, and in an ecstasy of passion they are discovered by *Merlin.* The stage setting is in anticipation of the graveyard scene in "The Blue Bird"—a scene wherein the gloomy garden has become ablaze with live beauty. Nought can be kept from his magic gaze, nought from the knowing power of *Arielle.*

Lancéor is now mortally wounded by

an adder, so it seems, though really all is prearranged by *Merlin,* who alone knows the remedy that will cure. It is difficult for him thus to test his son, yet it is so willed and he must obey. *Arielle* now materializes in the shape of a beautiful woman, and *Lancéor,* seeing her, becomes intoxicated by her brilliancy. *Joyzelle* is guided within their way, and *Arielle* disappears. *Lancéor* lies out of it as best he might, but a lie has no power to destroy the love kindled in *Joyzelle's* breast.

Then, seized with the terrible pangs of the slow-creeping poison, *Lancéor* is transformed in looks, but even the physical disagreeableness of his appearance cannot deter her. "Come, come," she cries, "do not think about the lies of the mirrors. . . . They do not know what they say; but love knows. . . ."

And so the play progresses through various shades of torture into which *Joyzelle* is plunged, the final one being much

like the situation in "Monna Vanna." To save *Lancéor,* she will do anything. *Merlin* demands that she give herself to him for a short hour in order to save the man she loves. She consents, but her love will not thus be thwarted. Almost in the spirit of a *Judith* going to *Holofernes, Joyzelle* enters *Merlin's* room, a dagger concealed beneath the folds of her cloak. Her love is so great that she would kill the obstacle that stands between *Lancéor* and herself. This is the supreme test, and the one that proves her worthy of being *Lancéor's* love.

Such is the bare outline of "Joyzelle"; there is deeper significance, which "Monna Vanna" fails to reach. There is truth in what E. K. Chambers says, that "the vitality of the heroine alone saves it from becoming a somewhat inhuman allegory of *Sagesse* and *Amour,* in the manner of the *'Roman de la Rose.'* " If you deprive the

play of outward personality—and *Joyzelle* does not impress one as being a woman—then the temptations of *Lancéor* are simply Maeterlinck's ideas concerning instinct given dramatic form. Once more we have the sage in the person of *Merlin.* And the whole play may be taken as the triumph of love in the person of *Joyzelle.*

Neither "Monna Vanna" nor this play is great. Each represents a stage in Maeterlinck's concept of life—a life that is far above the normal, yet within the reach of all; a life as deep as the infinite, at the bottom of which lies the real truth of existence.

In the next play, it is as though a bubble of Maeterlinckean thought had exploded, giving fragments of philosophy suitable for the child-world. It is as though Maeterlinck had gone through his own work, picking up scenes and thoughts worthy of expansion. He put them together in rather

childlike fashion, and sent forth "L'Oiseau Bleu"* to delight the world.

It was not a surprise that Maeterlinck should be the author of "The Blue Bird." Not only is it a subject fitly in accord with his technique, but, in essay after essay, and step by step in his philosophy, he has prepared the way for this fantastic expression of the soul of things. The one phase that is absolutely new in "The Blue Bird" is its direct appeal to the imagination of

*The play was first published in 1908. As to the origin of the Blue Bird of Happiness, Madame D'Aulnoy has a story in which it occurs; and there is also mentioned the blue flower of happiness in Dr. Henry Van Dyke's "Blue Flower," where he gives a quotation from Novalis, one of Maeterlinck's philosophical sponsors.

In the French production of the play, Madame Maeterlinck assumed the rôle of *Light*. The fantasy has made its way all over Russia. The London production, due to the imaginative genius of Herbert Trench (Spring, 1910), was received with great enthusiasm. The New York production occurred in the Fall of 1910 at the New Theatre. For comments on "The Blue Bird," see *Revue Bleue*, March 11, 1911, p. 316; *Petit Bleue*, March 23, 24, 1908 (Gérard Harry); *Nation*, 88:366-67; *Dial*, 46:296-97, May 1, 1909 (E. E. Hale, Jr.); *Harp. Wk.*, 54:20 (W. Winter); *Sat. Rev.*, 108:749, Dec. 18, 1909.

childhood through the utilization of externals easily understood, and through the projection of deep-founded belief into scenes of abiding beauty.

There are three approaches to "The Blue Bird": by way of the fairy element in the narrative, which only children deeply understand; by way of color and sound and motion, which on the surface make a thing of beauty to be a joy forever; and finally by way of the symbol which represents life all poignant, because it reveals life so simple in its hidden meaning.

It is never safe to determine what prompts an author to write a book or play. Yet we cannot but connect "The Blue Bird" with "Peter Pan." "Do you believe in fairies?" cried the latter, full of the youthful warmth of Miss Adams. And *Tyltyl's* appeal is much the same regarding the Blue Bird. "If any of you should find him, would you be so very kind as to give him back to us?" There is no similarity

in spiritual treatment, only in external balance. *Nanna* is a character even though a dog; *Tylo* is the soul and nature of all dogs. *Peter* is the embodiment of unchangeable childhood that never grows up; *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl* are the symbols of wandering humanity as well as the exemplification of Wordsworth's lines that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

"The Blue Bird" was written about children for the pleasure of grown people. It was immediately taken to the hearts of young folk. That is the mystery concerning all juvenile classics; they have no narrow age limits. As a mere pantomime we welcome it, since it fills a large want. It has a fairy quality and a tendency to animate which are the special characteristics of children; it has the excellent and rare quality of being true, according to imagination. Just in this respect does Maeterlinck remain constant to himself as an artist and as a philosopher. In his deep seri-

ousness, he strives to look at life in the same way that *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl* regarded their home after they had turned the diamond in the cap of fairy *Bérylune*. There is no such thing as matter, exclaimed Bishop Berkeley. The object ceases to exist just as soon as the subject ceases to observe. But Maeterlinck does not deny matter; he seeks for the soul of things, for matter, after all, is only the semblance.

Projected upon the stage, we have in "The Blue Bird" the sum and substance of all Breton folk-tales. To my mind, that is the genuine note in the play. It is not great in its unity of purpose; as a whole, it is not coherent in its unity of idea. But in its trend of events it is amusing and uplifting; it is beautiful.

No one need go to the play with an overpowering sense of its obscurity. In its details it is very obvious, much more so than "Aglavaine et Sélysette" or "Joyzelle." But if you know Maeterlinck, you

cannot help but recognize all those touches by which he is commonly identified. To children, the New Theatre production was pleasing because of the variety of the scenes which were wonderfully picturesque. To grown people "The Blue Bird" was effective because it was full of charm—a charm which either gripped instantly or else seemed ridiculously irrelevent to an irreverent mind.

As a critic, you must either recognize the fact that the chief aim of a producer is not perfection, but the suggestion of perfection, or else condemn the production, as mounted at the New Theatre, for certain weaknesses in its acting, certain barrenness in its staging, and certain inadequacy in its spiritual expression.

To my mind, "The Blue Bird" is a high pinnacle in theatre work, provided one views it with an open heart. For in its ethics it is naïvely simple, presenting inward questioning as a matter of outward

fact. I take it as a child's play with all the jumble of a child's wisdom, of a child's philosophy. Where are the dead? The answer is externalized in the Land of Memory scene. What is the Resurrection? This query is answered in the flowering of dead plants in the churchyard. Where do babies come from? Ponder the delicate humour of the Unborn Souls. It is a network of opinions already expressed elsewhere in Maeterlinck's writings, and is almost formless in its attempt to reach any definite conclusions. Maeterlinck has always stood for the essence of things, and the new note he adds to "The Blue Bird" is a humour which tempers his usual religious reverence.

In fact, there is quaint grace in identification of philosophy with character. In no way does "The Blue Bird" resemble an allegory, and the souls of *Bread, Sugar, Water, Fire,* and *Milk* are not to be regarded as abstractions, since they are de-

picted with individualized natures. I take them as external fancies, and as very real fancies at that; and a loaf of bread or running water has a different aspect now that I have seen "The Blue Bird." Who knows what overtones life may have in store for us if we care to follow in the footsteps of Maeterlinck!

"The Blue Bird" might have taken some other form had it not been for the essay on "Our Friend, the Dog" in "The Double Garden," wherein are found the humour and richness of the symbol that we find in "The Blue Bird"—the same estimate of the world from the eyes of things that are not supposed either to see or to see intelligently. The dog has found his god in man; he is the only living thing that has reached its god. The full force of this statement surges over us, not when we attempt to estimate the adjustment of a dog's life to the mysteries surrounding

man, but when we ask ourselves the question Maeterlinck himself propounds.

"How should we fare if we had to serve, while remaining within our sphere, a divinity, not an imaginary one, like to ourselves, because the offspring of our own brain, but a god actually visible, ever present, ever active, and as foreign, as superior to our being as we are to the dog?"

Tylo, therefore, is but the externalization of that philosophy, and the *Cat* is but an example of the same thought applied to another sphere of animal nature. It is as though Maeterlinck had set himself the task of showing how much fantasy there really is in mysticism—a fantasy with a queer blend of sexual emotion and of passionate fervor. Love, he somewhere says, is but the cry of souls longing to be born. Here, in a phrase almost, we note the seed for that exquisite flower of thought—the scene with the Unborn Souls, carrying their destinies with them upon earth.

Only Maeterlinck's technique—the touch of "The Intruder"—could compass the delicacy of such a scene without creating a laugh. Life is mystic, but not wholly so, for there are degrees of living. It might be wiser to say that to the mystic life is wholly mystic. Hence, those who take "The Blue Bird" literally, will find it a motley array of thoughts; yet even so, the fairy tale remains.

Beauty of the kind dominating this play shrivels at the approach of minute analysis. As a mere play, it is all an external pageant, giving to childhood an imaginative heritage our modern educators would deny. The flower can be torn to pieces in order to examine its detail, but then there will be no flower left. The shreds and patches of the theatre count where the whole is beauty, and, at the New Theatre, the shreds and patches were well hidden by the beauty. "Become as little children," despite your years, and the philosophy

with which "The Blue Bird" is fraught will reach you as a far-off echo of that pain of experience which only makes life worthy since it makes life active. "The Blue Bird" is a spiritualized "Peter Pan," though not as eternally youthful; it is as bewitching as "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Like the latter, it is human as well as humourous. For the first time, I fully realized that a symbol may be definite in its seeming indefiniteness; that it may contain a legitimate humour of its own, no matter how spiritual its meaning. Children who attempt to give answer to their own questioning of the mystery which surrounds them, unconsciously show that quality of humour we attribute to the symbol. Herein we find Maeterlinck's simple treatment of the belief that all ills are healed in the spiritual light of truth and wisdom. *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl,* representative of humanty, go forth with fairy *Bérylune,* having been

given by her the power of seeing the past and future, as well as the souls of things. These two are in search for the Blue Bird of Happiness. Science, superstitious faith, fear, confront them, and everywhere they think they see this Blue Bird, but they are only deceived. Then, at the last, when they return home, they find this happiness in their own hearts. Here is a true story, a wholesome moral, and what is more, an imaginative revel. And in these modern days we need imagination to offset overshadowing fact.

Only when Maeterlinck brought *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl* before the terrors of night did he overstep the simplicity of the child element in "The Blue Bird." For there are no scientific doubts in the child mind, and there was no necessity, as many critics have noted, to push little wanderers into darkness on their search for happiness, even though unseen forces, many of them evil, unconsciously surround them. Man may

look for fulfilment outside of himself, but the kingdom is within. Yet though the child heart is essentially merry, it is not so merry that it does not ask questions of staggering proportions.*

"The Blue Bird" is not a retrogression in the development of Maurice Maeterlinck; neither is it a great advance. But it is a most beautiful exemplification of the mystic in a most piquant mood.

"Mary Magdalene" is Maeterlinck's latest published play, and one which can very readily be dismissed with a word. In the introductory note, he speaks of having borrowed two situations from Heyse's "Maria von Magdala." The text contains

*Maeterlinck later added to his play a scene dealing with the Palace of Happiness where *Mytyl* and *Tyltyl* see such abstractions as *Being Rich, Satisfied Vanity, Eating, Drinking* and *Fat Laughter*—all of them disagreeable Luxuries—scattered to the Cave of Miseries, and in their places appear such Happinesses as *Home, Being Good, Loving One's Parents* and *Innocent Thoughts,* and such Great Joys as *Being Just, Understanding* and *Mother Love.*

the usual wisdom of Maeterlinck; it deals with the salvation of *Mary,* who, from a courtesan, becomes a spiritualized follower of the Master. The Romans accuse her of loving the Christ in a worldly fashion; in their pagan souls they cannot see the new light shining in her eyes. Only the voice of the Master is heard, and his spoken word is the word of the Bible. In the end, *Mary Magdalene* is told that she may save the Christ provided she give herself to the Roman who loves her and who has the crucifixion journey in charge. But though she hears the crowds outside on their way to Calvary, *Mary* stands motionless in ecstasy. It is a great dramatic moment, but the only moment in the play. And because of this, it fails in its vital interest.*

*It was published in 1910, and has been played at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. It has also been given productions in Russia and France. The New York production took place at the New Theatre during the season of 1910-11, Olga Nethersole totally misconceiving the spiritual love-motive of the character. See *Bookman,* 32:419-21; *Bookman,* 32:602-4 (C. Hamilton).

Maurice Maeterlinck

Maeterlinck is one of the big forces in modern drama. But if we examine closely, we will see that his originality came in the dramas that are least suited for stage production. It was his utilization of forces never before handled atmospherically that stamped his technique at once as individual. And his iconoclasm, if we may call a constructive philosopher iconoclastic, lies in the spiritual progressiveness of the individual. To him, the whole social fabric is dependent upon the full awakening of the soul. Maeterlinck, the dramatist, is, after all, the philosopher at play. Yet even play to Maeterlinck is a serious thing.*

*Maeterlinck's whole service to the theatre would include his activity as a translator. In 1895, he prepared Webster's "'Tis a Pity She's a Whore" for the Théâtre de l'Œuvre (Ollendorff, 1895), under the title of "Annabella," and, in 1908, translated "Macbeth" in a fashion comparable to the best of the Shakespearean translations made by Schwob. This version of "Macbeth" was published in *L' Illustration.* See "Realization of 'Macbeth,'" *Independent,* 67:644-49 (A. F. Sanborn); "Maeterlinck Out-of-Doors," *Harp. Wk.,* 54:12 (A. F. Sanborn); "'Macbeth' at Saint-Wandrille," *Fortn.* 92:605-18 (Excellent); and above all, see "Tragedy

of 'Macbeth,'" by Maeterlinck, *Forum*, 43:400-8; *Fortn.*, 93:692-701. As to the method of translating, we learn the following from Madame Maeterlinck:

"We work by day in the marvellous peace of the forest of Saint-Wandrille. First, Maeterlinck reads a phrase, constructing it according to the French form. Then he repeats it, tearing away the French garb which does not suit it; and already it makes one start. It hardly appears, yet it appears, beyond the form, on the other side, as it were, of the word. [She knew little English; Maeterlinck reads but cannot speak it.] And once again he repeats it, disjointing more and more the first sense that had presented itself. . . ."

This problem of translation was serious to Maeterlinck. He writes:

"The humble translators face to face with Shakespeare are like painters seated in front of the same forest, the same seas, on the same mountain. Each of them will make a different picture. And a translation is almost as much an *état d'âme* as is a landscape. Above, below, and all around the literal and literary sense of the primitive phrase, floats a secret life which is all but impossible to catch, and which is, nevertheless, more important than the external life of the words and of the images. It is that secret life which it is important to understand and to reproduce as well as one can. Extreme prudence is required, since the slightest false note, the smallest error, may destroy the illusion and destroy the beauty of the finest page. It excuses in advance every effort of the kind, even this one, which comes after so many others, and contributes to the common work merely the very modest aid of a few phrases which chance may now and then have favored."

Thus does Maeterlinck set the standard for his own translators.

CHAPTER VIII

MAURICE MAETERLINCK: PHILOSOPHER

"As a poet, he [Maeterlinck] delights me by the deep grace and the meaning of his creations; as a moralist, he abounds in truths on the soul and life that strike me as new, and that I listen to with profound reverence. . . . I have never met M. Maeterlinck; I know only by hearsay that he is not afflicted with neurasthenia or neuropathy, that he is not even a spinner of niceties after the manner of 'des Esseintes,' but a tall, robust, healthy individual, fond of every form of sport, with no perverse tastes, no 'gamy' ideas, and who seeks sensations only where these may be found by every one."—EDOUARD ROD.

I

TO those who have read the simple annals of "Marie-Claire," it is easy to understand how Maeterlinck appealed to the author of this delicate transcript from life. He is not difficult of understanding,

even though the fine strands of his idealism are rather above and beyond the roar and turmoil of modern civilization. He is a sage, and as such a lover of solitude; his interest is upon all things, and he measures their value according to the impress they make upon the inner development of man. He has passed through a long training, and each step of the way has been marked by some essay which represents his momentary comment.

It is almost incumbent upon us to regard Maeterlinck, the philosopher, in an abstract manner, even as he slipped the personal equation in writing of Ruysbroeck, Novalis, and Emerson. And like a subtle aroma his theory of life has permeated the thinking world, forcing the mind back into a consideration of the mysteries which surround it. We can say that in his dramatic theory Maeterlinck has influenced the younger dramatists of Ger-

many,* and that most especially has he been an inspiration in the so-called Überbrettl' movement.† But as a philosopher, he is simply in the stream of evolution through which mysticism has been passing since the days of Plato, Plotinus, St. Bernard, Marcus Aurelius, Novalis, Ruysbroeck, Jakob Boehme, Swedenborg, and Emerson.

His essays, therefore, represent not so much a system of philosophy as a mode of thinking; they represent not so much an attitude toward life as Maeterlinck's attitude toward life. He is a mystic who has been subjected to the fires of scientific investigation, and his idealism is not so cold that it lacks the common appeal for all. Maeterlinck's philosophy is no dogmatic preachment; he has no creed except that which has come out of his innermost

*See Witkowski's "German Drama of the 19th Century" (Holt).

†See Percival Pollard's "Masks and Minstrels of New Germany" (Luce).

consciousness, yet his essays are full of that spirit which is at the bottom of Christianity. There is no form to Maeterlinck's development of religious belief. We know that he repudiated the Catholic faith, and immediately set forth to discover. And in reading Maeterlinck, one feels always that he is on the verge of a tremendous revelation. As he writes in "Wisdom and Destiny," regarding this revelation: "We should be ready with welcome, with warmest and keenest and fullest, most heartfelt and intimate welcome. And whatever the form it shall take on the day that it comes to us, the best way of all to prepare for its fitting reception is to crave for it now, to desire it as lofty, as perfect, as vast, as ennobling as the soul can conceive." Why go afield, thinking that the force of Nature lies beyond, when, after all, the greatest study of mankind is man?

Maeterlinck is not new; he is simply a

high, a rare example in an age of material advance. He reflects Christianity, since Christ Himself was a seer. But being a mystic, it is wrong to consider Maeterlinck as no modernist. No one has been more influenced by science, by the modern attitude, than he. His mode of expression is pure, and it is his calm speech that holds and fascinates. He is particularly *alive* to every shade of modern thought, and he works it over until no particle of the common clay holds to it. He denudes it of everything but its essence.

It might almost be claimed that Maeterlinck is no lover of man in the special sense, but of humanity in the abstract.*

*It is not my intention to examine Maeterlinck's philosophy comparatively with other systems, or even with the "school" whose disciple, in part, he is. I only wish to reach some general idea of his attitude toward life, which is well expressed in the essays. I have read articles connecting his position with Comte's and Spinoza's attitudes. I have heard arguments which showed his dependence on pragmatism. See Dr. Ludwig Sehring's "Maeterlinck als Philosoph und Dichter"; also Edward M. Colie's Introduction to "The Buried Temple."

He makes no worldly distinctions, but attempts to define those universal forces toward which the best in Nature works. Because of this he has a message for all; and if his expression has beauty in it rather than strength, his philosophy itself calls for strength in order to fulfill its mandates. He taps the very heart of existence, and draws from it secrets that are not impossible.

Matthew Arnold, in that beautiful poem of his on "The Buried Life," writes:

"But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
Athirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines."

To my mind, this is the intent of Maeterlinck's philosophy; he penetrates deeper and deeper, and his mysticism keeps him

always in the way of mystery. No sooner does he clear one doubt, than a higher problem presents itself in the light of richer and deeper knowledge. He would have people satisfied only with the best; he would transmute evil into good; he would make life's responsibility the realization of the most ideal character. Even as science has sought in every way to control Nature, so Maeterlinck's philosophy* would make man master of his own fate. "The Buried Temple" is full of Hellenic philosophy of this kind.

The ideal life, therefore, is largely the result of man's effort and of man's desire; here are involved a consideration of morality and of practical existence.† There are three aspects of Maeterlinck that find

*See "Maeterlinck's Philosophy," A. M. Sholl, *Gunton,* 26:46-51; "Maurice Maeterlinck als Philosoph," *Preuss. Jahrbuch,* v. 99, pp. 232-62, Berlin, 1900.

†"Maeterlinck as Moralist," Algar Thorold, *Indep. Rev.,* 8:184-97; "M. Maurice Maeterlinck, Moralist and Artist," *Edin. Rev.,* 193:350-77, April, 1901; *Liv. Age,* 231:201-20.

expression in his essays: the scientific which tempers the enthusiasm of his mysticism; the intellectual which is tempered by the mystic; and the spiritual which changes experience of a practical kind into the ideal. He is not afraid but careful; he is not doubtful but reticent. His obscurity, if it may be called so, partakes of the illusiveness of the substance he examines. He strikes one as being intensely concerned with the mystery of life, and the fact that he is now identified with a tone of expression is indication of its having become a part of him. To Maeterlinck, life is an open book for all to examine, and it is the moral obligation placed upon all that they do examine it. Thorold writes:

"Life, the actual tale of days of men and women, working in fields and cities, in courts and camps, at home and abroad 'on perilous seas, forlorn,' has laid on him the fascination of its touch. It is in this actuality, this nearness to experience, that

his value consists. He probes into the moral fact as we find it in our common human nature, unconcerned with its metaphysical justification, and frankly admitting that our present knowledge does not enable us demonstrably to relate it to the rest of the Cosmos."

We have already touched upon the general character of Maeterlinck's philosophy as revealed in his plays; his prose work is simply a more complete expression of the same belief and of the same attitude. Maeterlinck always strikes me as a man who gives forth, sometimes emotionally, at other times searchingly, what he has learned after calm study. There is nothing false about him, nothing assertive. He grows, and he is constantly learning. He never rests content, however, with the emotional factor, but is always looking behind, not in order to unsettle, but in order to make sure that he is on firm foundation. Maeterlinck's essays are themselves measures

of his growth in mind and spirit. There are some who accuse him of sacrificing the absolute scientific truth for a theory or for the beauty of a literary style; there are some, even, who would be tempted to point to his "The Life of the Bee" and "The Intelligence of Flowers" as examples of his Nature-faking. But Maeterlinck's style, more lucid than Emerson's, is the natural expression of a calm spirit that, having seen the scientific fact, dares to temper it for his spiritual use.

Maeterlinck is now thoroughly a part of the mystic atmosphere in which he finds himself. We have to accept his altitude or else discard him. For, according to Maeterlinck's view: "He will be far less exposed to disaster who cherishes ideas within him that soar high above the indifference, selfishness, vanities of everyday life." And so he has reached that height after serving as disciple, and some of his

first essay work was done in the interests of the masters he served.

II

His first task was a translation from the Flemish of Ruysbroeck L'Admirable's "L'Ornement des Noces Spirituelles" (1891), for which he wrote an introduction,* in which is to be found the confession that the translation was done for the express purpose of giving satisfaction to those followers of Plato, those neo-Platonians, among whom he counted himself. In preparation for the task, he laboured through the German of Novalis's "Les Disciples à Saïs" and "Les Fragments," both of which he was next to translate (1895), through the "Biographia Litteraria" of Coleridge, the "Timæus" of

*In part, this introduction is included in the French edition of "Trésor des Humbles," but not in the English translation. In fact it has not been translated into English.

Plato, the "Enneads" of Plotinus, Saint-Denys' "Divine Names," and Jacob Boehme's "Aurora." As he confesses, Ruysbroeck's* book has neither ordinary air nor ordinary light, and requires preparation for its understanding; it is written almost as an exact science, and, like all exact sciences, needs profound instruction. It is a tremendous mandate: "Know Thyself," and it is said in "Wisdom and Destiny" that "nothing befalls us that is not of the nature of ourselves." Hence, we are virtually our own masters regarding the facing of events; the soul should be big enough to rise above events. Ruysbroeck, Emerson, and Maeterlinck are only mile-posts in the science of such living. One is liable to lose patience with the mystic simply because he lives in a rarefied atmosphere,

*Ruysbroeck was prior of the Abbey of Groenendale, near Brussels, and was born in 1293. Many of his writings are preserved in his own hand. Of this time also was Thomas Aquinas.

—the mediæval mystic especially—but Maeterlinck is not anæmic on the heights. What is interesting about this introduction, for our purposes, is the light it throws upon Maeterlinck's own knowledge of the subject as it is found in the writings of the Greeks and of the seers of the Far East—platonism, sufism, brahmanism, and buddhism. Maeterlinck has caught from Ruysbroeck his love of silence and of shadow.*

"If I have translated this," writes Maeterlinck, "it is solely because I believe that the mystics are the present jewels in all the prodigious treasures of humanity. . . . Mystical truths have this strange superiority over truths of the ordinary kind, that they know neither age nor death. There is not a truth which has not descended on

*See "Ruysbroeck and Maeterlinck" by William Sharp, *Academy*, March 16, 1895. The work was first published in 1891, and has recently been reissued. Other translations of Ruysbroeck are those by Ernest Hello and J. T. Stoddart.

the world one morning, marvellous in its youth and strength, and arrayed with the fresh and wonderful hue appropriate to those things which have never before been uttered; traverse now the infirmaries of the human soul, where all these truths come at length to die, and you will not find there a single mystical thought. They possess the immensity of Swedenborg's angels, which progress continually towards the springtime of their youth, so that the eldest angels always appear the youngest."

A mystic thought* is one that pierces the innermost secrets of existence, and one might almost believe, after reading Maeterlinck's introductions to "L'Ornement des Noces Spirituelles" and to "Les Disciples à Saïs" that it takes a mystic to catch a mystic. For Maeterlinck is not so interested in the external events marking

*A popular bibliography on mysticism is to be found in the *Independent*, July 29, 1909, p. 251. See Vaughan's "English Mystics"; "Mysticism of Maurice Maeterlinck," Jane T. Stoddart, *Bookman* (London), 38:21-24.

the existence of the man as in the idea which brings him nearer to universal truth. Maeterlinck here shows how much he is indebted to the mystics; he has himself been through a rigid school of preparation, and to trace his development would mean to trace the whole movement of platonism and mysticism. He is a wide reader and a profound one, as these introductions will show. And his books to follow are simply the outcome of his studies, acted upon by his healthy and exquisite personality, as well as by the spirit of the times in which he lives.

III

Emerson was Maeterlinck's greatest influence, though in his essays Marcus Aurelius, whom he has defined as thought itself, is more often quoted. He contributed an introduction to Mlle. Mali's trans-

lation of seven of Emerson's essays* (1894), and therein one may easily detect the impress of "The Over-Soul." Commenting upon the saying of Novalis that "only one thing matters, the quest of the transcendental self," Maeterlinck writes: "We live only by virtue of the transcendental existence whose acts and thoughts pierce at every moment the envelope that closes us about." To him the science of human grandeur is the strangest of sciences, and always he finds this human grandeur in the lowest as in the highest. For it is not intellect alone that satisfies; at times the farmer is as significant as Plato, Socrates, and Marcus Aurelius; the radiant presence speaks only in silence.

*These were: "Self-Reliance"; "Compensation"; "Spiritual Laws"; "The Poet"; "Character"; "The Over-Soul"; "Fate." Mlle. Mali's *nom de plume* was I. Will. Miss Emerson makes mention of this translation. See Hamilton Osgood's "Maeterlinck and Emerson," *Arena,* March, 1896, 15:563-73; translation of Maeterlinck's essay on Emerson in *Poet-Lore,* Jan.-Mar., 1898, 10:76-84. For the original French of the essay, see "Trésor des Humbles."

For, as Emerson says: "A man is the façade of a temple, wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man,—the eating, drinking, planting, counting man,—does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresent himself. Him we do not respect; but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend." And he continues thus: "When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love." Hence Maeterlinck's conviction that it is not the man we know, but his soul.

In Emerson, Maeterlinck recognizes the hope of the humble. Philosophers like Swedenborg, Pascal, Novalis, and Hello are too far away from common sympathy. Goethe, Marcus Aurelius, and Carlyle wander afield with the soul. But Emerson, "the good morning shepherd of pale meadows," remains in the familiar fold,

and breathes confidence in the mystery. The little moments in life may seem to count as nought, but they constitute life itself in the end, and we should learn to reverence them. That is what Emerson teaches, and hence the truth in the title Maeterlinck applies to him, "the sage of commonplace days."

IV

Maeterlinck is one with Carlyle in the matter of silence;* when a person speaks, he protects his soul from discovery. As soon as speech ceases, the soul steps forth. It takes moral and spiritual bigness to be silent. This speechless moment may occur to one any day, even as any day the soul may add to itself that which contains the secret of life. The healthy significance

*"The Treasure of the Humble" was published in 1896 (Société du Mercure de France). See *Academy*, May 1, 1897, p. 465; *Sewanee Rev.*, 3:276; Walkley's introduction to the English translation.

of Maurice Maeterlinck lies in his belief that we are nearing a spiritual crisis, and that in our everyday existence it draws close to us. We are amidst occult powers, and we are thoroughly conscious of them, for they are attacking orthodox faith. Maeterlinck is humble before the awakening of the soul, and he stands with the lowliest, expectant. For, as he says: "The peasant, to whom the power of expressing that which lies in his soul should suddenly be given, would at this moment pour forth ideas that were not yet in the soul of Racine." Thus could we grasp our spiritual advance over any other age to which a revelation of relative truth has become manifest. With this awakening of the soul we are being drawn closer together because of the disappearance of useless convention.

Maeterlinck would pierce the veil of thought; he would examine into all of the events that lie in wait for us; he would

determine whether we attract death, or whether death lures us. We are dimly conscious of our real life that comes to us only at rare moments, and never more so are we aware of the superior life than when we feel the predestined near us. We call it superstition when we hear some one declare a child to be marked for death. We do not fear this truth, but none the less do we believe that there is some truth in it.

Facts will in no way illustrate the spiritual truth that we only dimly realize; we are dealing with the soul which, though intangible, is none the less alive, and subject to spiritual laws as our body is amenable to physical laws. Hence, there is a mystic morality as there is a social morality. We must study the sensibility of this soul of ours; we must strive to understand its expression and its reticence. The soul soars high above contamination; it even soars above the inner life which Maeterlinck

discusses. For there are three kingdoms, that of the human, that of the psychic, and that of the divine. There are degrees of spiritual consciousness, and degrees of spiritual action. Mystic morality, therefore, deals with the action of the soul.

Holding such beliefs as these, Maeterlinck rapidly reached his conclusions regarding the tragical in daily life, and out of the humble, amidst our active silence, he would frame a drama. Such was the basis for his marionette theory. One can understand Maeterlinck's *static* theatre which implies an active philosophy. Everything we do, everything we read, has its unexpressed secret. That is its *static* significance.

But because this inner quality is not visible to any but the eyes of the soul, its use is impracticable without pictorial adjuncts that advance with every change of inward feeling. Having wakened his old man before a lighted lamp to the exist-

ence of mysteries surrounding him, he next proceeds to go in search of destiny, and to face it. And though in his essay on "The Star" he points to certain destinies which are decided, and which no will may change, yet he asks the question which concerns the soul in its varying development —a question involving his assertion in "Wisdom and Destiny" that "we become that which we discover in the sorrows and joys that befall us." For he writes: "When the same sorrow knocks at two adjoining doors, at the houses of the just and the unjust, will its method of action be identical in both?"*

Maeterlinck's philosophy has inner action. His eyes do not ignore the physical fact; they penetrate and look beyond. In life he recognizes an invisible goodness, an inner beauty; and, being a mystic, he recognizes a deeper life than mere exist-

*Herein we detect the seeds for "The Buried Temple" and "Wisdom and Destiny."

ence. He is spiritually brave and is constantly appealing to the spiritual bravery of others. Often we are not just because we fear the force that cries for justice; often we are not good because we do not divine the natural yearnings of the soul. But we all have the potentiality. And where Maeterlinck's optimism is of such potent force rests in its infinite reaches. The most ideal social justice, the most ideal social goodness will develop only after we have learned to live close to our soul.

Life, in the Maeterlinckean sense, does not begin with birth; nor is one born only once. But we are truly born when we, however humble, "feel at the deepest of us that there is something grave and unexpected in life." Each advance in the awakening of our soul means another birth. Here is hope, but it calls for courage. The springs of life are far down, and they ex-

hibit a beauty far more beautiful than the eye can see. For the soul has power to create beauty, and the degree of beauty depends upon the degree to which the soul is developed.

Such thoughts as I have here epitomized constitute Maeterlinck's "The Treasure of the Humble." They invite the mind in pure channels, and they exact exercise. One can read Maeterlinck and remain *static,* but if this be so, then one does not truly understand Maeterlinck. It is no *mild* philosophy that he upholds; yet, on the other hand, it would be difficult of practice by him upon whom social condition had laid a heavy hand. "Wouldst thou be as these are, live as they," sings Matthew Arnold. Such philosophy is good food for the starving soul, but I doubt whether its beneficent light would be welcomed in the dark hut where bread and meat were wanting.

V

Maeterlinck analyzes to the very depths of abstraction; his vista is an infinite number of rooms to eternity. In his progress forward he has never retrograded. And though he analyze away the idea of an infallible Judge, he argues himself back again into a better conception of divine justice. Nature is nowhere a dispenser of justice; it makes no difference what the moral behind a cause, this moral will in no way influence the effect. That Superior Justice which we have treasured, the illusions of the past, the sterile hopes held forth by our old faith—all these must now be discarded, and we must let nothing interfere in our search for the truth.*

Relieved, therefore, of superfluous beliefs, we start out determined on this

"The Buried Temple" was first published in 1896; "Wisdom and Destiny" in 1898. See *Critic*, 42:76-77; *Athenæum*, 1902, 2:276; *Academy*, Oct. 29, 1898, p. 147.

truth. Justice is a thing man-made; injustice is a thing man-made. For æons and æons we have shifted the responsibility upon a god of our desire, whereas in the soul is found the seat of justice. Maeterlinck is of the belief that a mystery rarely disappears, and he rejoices that in modern life we have gained in the shifting of this mystery from the god of our superstition and fear to life itself. Since mystery cannot be destroyed, man's object should be to refine to the most vital mysteries. Once more, he begins with man as the centre of this problem of the divine. The justice of things is in us. Maeterlinck warns us to be careful of our indiscriminate use of the word *inevitable*.

In fact, if something big in our belief snaps, we should never show sorrow, for it indicates that we are holding to truths that are no longer true. "It is our duty," writes Maeterlinck, "and one we dare not renounce, to prepare homes for truths that

shall come, to maintain in good order the forces destined to serve them, and to create open spaces within us." And we note how much he advanced in his theory of drama when he averred that "the truth that is undoubtedly truest from the human point of view must evidently appeal to us more than the truth which is truest from the universal point of view." Whatever mystifies us, we identify largely with fatality, and now Maeterlinck, once a believer in fatalism, repudiates such explanations. There is much in his analysis of "The Evolution of Mystery" that pertains to drama.

"The Buried Temple" deals with those forces pointing to Maeterlinck, the mystic, and Maeterlinck, the scientist; for he is an evolutionist in both instances, and there is no form that may not be on the eve of change. That is his opinion regarding the kingdom of matter. For, as an illustration of how earnestly, how persistently, he

awaits the next move, we quote the closing of his consideration of matter. He says:

"Our brains and nerves of to-day are due to fearful hordes of swimming or flying reptiles. These obeyed the order of their life. They did what they had to do. They modified matter in the fashion prescribed to them. And we, by carrying particles of this same matter to the degree of extraordinary incandescence proper to the thought of man, shall surely establish in the future something that never shall perish."

Maeterlinck animates the past as he vitalizes the future; as our past has been, so is our present, so will our future be. But this past is malleable, and we must be master of it, else we confess that our moral growth is weak. Out of the past Maeterlinck has come, full blooded, and looking for the truth.

To have arrived at the point where wisdom knows when to exercise will in the

control of destiny, has been a wonderful phase of Maurice Maeterlinck's development, and very largely has the analysis of "Wisdom and Destiny" convinced him of his course. We have spoken of the sage in the marionette dramas and in the plays of a later period, but after reading this book, we then know the true value of a sage. We realize for the first time how rigorous the mandate: Know Thyself. For to quote, "he is wise who at last sees in suffering only the light that it sheds on his soul; and whose eyes never rest on the shadow it casts upon those who have sent it towards him." Reason is not wisdom; but he is wise who allows his reason to be guided by wisdom. It was after living in such rarefied altitudes of thought as these that Maeterlinck began to insist upon the necessity for living the *normal* life, advancing fearlessly but slowly, and biding one's time rather than compromising, as *Peer Gynt* did, or annihilating oneself, as

Brand did in his cry for all or nothing. I should say that whereas "Wisdom and Destiny" is an excellent beginning for the comprehension of Maeterlinck's life demands, it is the least systematic of his books. "The Buried Life" is a profounder work, inasmuch as the life factors in it are more clearly defined in their relation to the modern world. "Wisdom and Destiny" is more a precept than any of Maeterlinck's other essays. It has beauty and eloquence, while "The Buried Life" has more largeness. Maeterlinck's sweetness and light have never obscured his force; they have opened a way, as his dramas did in the theatre, for the unknown to become accessible to man's inward scrutiny. The sage exists only where the soul is aflame with the golden glow of truth, and this golden glow abides only at the heart of all virtue. For, as he says, "the more clear ideas we possess, the more do we learn to respect those that as yet are still vague."

VI

Maeterlinck, the scientist, is only Maeterlinck, the poet, affected by science, and I would rather trust to his very acute observation, retaining the charm and grace that he has, than feel that his sources were all first hand and that his conclusions were evolved from the laboratory. There are some who quarrel with him because his vocabulary is not scientific; because he does not falter in his expression over points that have proven disconcerting to biologists. What Maeterlinck does is to view the world of Nature in a human way, and it may be that in his human nature he oversteps scientific truth. M. Gaston Bonnier, among other unscientific examples gleaned from "La Vie des Abeilles," calls attention to the fact that though Maeterlinck speaks of the heart of the bee, in reality the bee has no heart. Yet I feel, after reading Maeterlinck and after enjoying

the spirit of his scientific observation, however popular, however inexact, that he has come very near to the richest way of observing Nature. To reconcile science and poetry, there is, nevertheless, no need to be false to either, though I am inclined to agree with John Burroughs, who, collecting a Nature anthology of poetry subjected to the rigorous exactions of science, dared include Keats's unscientific "Ode to a Nightingale," because, where there was such poetry, one could afford to lose the bird!

In his writing, Maeterlinck does not pose as a scientist, though he has read extensively in science. He did not set out to write a treatise on apiculture in "The Life of the Bee," but made use of a phenomenon of Nature to explain the phenomenon of man. And when one is through reading it, though the exact knowledge may be limited, the romance of the subject has been vividly impressed

upon one. Wherever Maeterlinck is doubtful about scientific truth, he is as doubtful regarding the truth of life. Scientists say that whenever he is confused by the physical fact, he covers his confusion by a mystical word, and that whenever he is pleased by an image that carries part of a scientific fact, he stretches the image too far and utterly destroys the value of the fact. Bonnier,* for instance, disbelieves the theory that science can be reconciled with literary expression, and he writes that Maeterlinck *"le poète accorde à la Nature une intelligence supérieure à celle des hommes,—comme si les hommes ne faisaient pas partie de la Nature."*

*"La Science chez Maeterlinck," Gaston Bonnier, *La Revue*, ser. 4, 69:448-57, Paris, 1907. "The Life of the Bee" was published in 1900. "The Wrath of the Bee" is found in "The Double Garden," and "The Bee's Homer" was published in *The Forum* (44:257-71) for September, 1910. "The Intelligence of Flowers" is contained in "The Measure of the Hours" and has been published in a separate booklet by Dodd, Mead & Company; originally appeared in

I should say that wherever Maeterlinck desires most to escape the strictures of science, he goes over to philosophical speculation. And in a poetic way, he is as interesting and as lucid as Huxley was in a scientific way. The method is somewhat the same, and in his contemplation of scientific phenomena, we agree with M. Rod when he says that "Maeterlinck has undertaken to prove, by his own example, that the poet was mistaken, and that poetry is to be found in all things, or, at least, that when it dwells in a man's heart

Harp. Mag., 114:59, 465, 540. In "The Measure of the Hours" is also to be found the essay on "Perfumes." In "The Double Garden" are "Field Flowers," (*Fortn.*, 79:243-46), "Chrysanthemums," (*Century*, 67:165-68), and "Old-Fashioned Flowers," (1906) [*Outlook*, 76:319-39]. See the collection (1907) called "Life and Flowers." See Franz Strunz's "Ueber Maeterlinck's Intelligenz der Blumen," *Beitrage u. Skizzen z. Gesch. der Naturwissenschaften*, pp. 185-92, Hamburg, 1909; also Joseph Boubée's "L'Intelligence des fleurs d'apres M. Maurice Maeterlinck"; Études p. d. père d. l. comp. d. Jesus, v. 113, pp. 844-58, Paris, 1907. See also Edouard Rod's critique on "The Life of the Bee," *International Q.*, 5:431-47.

or mind, he can cause it to spring from everything.

In his essay on "In an Automobile" ["The Double Garden"], he spiritualizes the mechanical, even as Kipling did in a different manner in "The Ship that Found Herself." And the latter's fictional treatment of telepathy in "Wireless" and "They" reveals the mystic using a new medium.

VII

Maeterlinck infuses into his "The Life of the Bee"* all the philosophy of "The Treasure of the Humble," and of "Wisdom and Destiny," and the hive becomes a home for an allegory wherein man finds his social system poignantly treated. And

*"The Life of the Bee" has been criticized in the following periodicals: *Blackwood,* 169:860-62; *Athenæum,* 1901, 1:750; *Nation,* 72:517; *Independent,* 53:1379-80; *Fortn.,* 76:167-69 (S. Gwynne); *Bookman,* 13:564-66; *Book Buyer,* 23:115-17; *Arena,* 27:381-86. See "The Wrath of the Bee," *Harp.,* 105:467-69; "In the Hive," *Fortn.,* 75:465-75.

at the close, after he has done with his long analogies, Maeterlinck writes:

"The bees know not whether they will eat the honey they harvest, as we know not who it is shall reap the profit of the cerebral substance we shall have formed, or of the intelligent fluid that issues therefrom and spreads over the universe, perishing when our life ceases or persisting after death. As they go from flower to flower, collecting more honey than themselves and their offspring can need, let us go from reality to reality seeking food for the incomprehensible flame, and thus, certain of having fulfilled our organic duty, preparing ourselves for whatever befall."

I would even go further than Rod and say that Maeterlinck's observation of animals is not only unique, but that his consideration of flowers is also the most uncommon. The view is always human, and, if not sexual, it is social. But in no case is it lit-

eral, and it has an atmosphere all its own, like the breath of old-fashioned flowers.

"The Measure of the Hours" and "The Double Garden" continue his mystic philosophy, showing in many ways a close relationship to modern life. Maeterlinck's occultism ripens into speculation on the future in the vein of the past, into examination of immortality and chance. He is in the whirl of revolutionary ideas, and because of this we are prone to consider him in a way something of a revolutionist. If our morality is anxious, it is because worn-out virtue has too long been holding us in thrall; and it is also anxious because no one will think it right to leave vacant in life the places once occupied by this same worn-out virtue. What shall take its place?

Maeterlinck's greatest modern voice is heard in his essay, "The Leaf of Olive" ["The Double Garden"].* Herein he

*Reviewed in *Atlantic*, 94:273-74; *Bookman*, 19: 605-7; *Contemporary*, 86; 150-52; *Athenæum*, 1904,

cries: "We live in pregnant and decisive times"; for we are passing from a religious period into one of increased social justice, wherein our ideal is not circumscribed by an anthropomorphic god nor limited by a creed, but stretches into infinity. We fear names, not knowing the full import of what they represent. Yet now, in the new age upon us, we must be bold in search for that which the gods have heretofore concealed.

VIII

Maeterlinck has here been sketched only in the essential outlines; the time has not arrived for the full portrait. He is advancing year by year, and, though he dwells far away from us, still, in his literary expression, Maeterlinck's thought is

2:70; *Independent,* 57:1327-28. See Maeterlinck on "Social Revolution," *Putnam,* 1:643-47; on the "Latin and Teuton Races," *Putnam,* 1:77-80.

upon the distinguishing problems of the times. His philosophy would make possible the exercise of universal suffrage; his calm contemplation of the forces of mankind might hasten the ideal of universal peace. If there is to be a cataclysmic change or even an evolutionary shifting in our religious belief, it were wise to have Emerson and Maeterlinck to guide us into a harbor where we may take bearings of our spiritual assets, even if we may not be satisfied with their transcendental preachment. And, where Maeterlinck is so invigorating lies in his ability to convince us that after every one of our superstitions has been taken from us, we shall find that all these years they have had nothing whatever to do with the exercise of our fundamental virtues. That is his significance to the modern world.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

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For the benefit of the reader who might wish to trace further the artistic atmosphere surrounding Maurice Maeterlinck, when he first went to Paris, I have condensed the following information and references, taken from the monumental work by M. Catulle Mendès, "Rapport à M. Le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts sur le Mouvement Poétique Français de 1867 à 1900, précédé de Réflexions sur la Personnalité de l'Esprit Poétique de France, suivi d'un Dictionnaire Bibliographique et Critique et d'une nomenclature chronologique de la Plupart des Poètes Français du XIX^{e} Siècle" (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1902). Each poet's name is accompanied by a list of his works, with dates of publication, followed by quoted opinions. Regarding opinions on Maeterlinck himself, see articles:

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[Maeterlinck was also influenced by Edmond Picard, and by Hello, Georges Minne, and Odilon Redon.]

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